

William Shakespeare



A Play
CORIOLANUS



Dr. Beryl Rowland, *Introduction* / Lucy M. Fitzpatrick, *Notes*

William Shakespeare



TO THE READER

THIS FIGURE, THAT THOU HERE SEEST PUT,
IT WAS FOR GENTLE SHAKESPEARE CUT;
WHEREIN THE GRAVER HAD A STRIFE
WITH NATURE, TO OUT-DO THE LIFE:
O, COULD HE BUT HAVE DRAWN HIS WIT
AS WELL IN BRASS, AS HE HATH HIT
HIS FACE; THE PRINT WOULD THEN SURPASS
ALL, THAT WAS EVER WRIT IN BRASS.
BUT, SINCE HE CANNOT, READER, LOOK,
NOT ON HIS PICTURE, BUT HIS BOOK.

BEN: JONSON.

The Mediaeval view of man was generally not an exalted one. It saw him as more or less depraved, fallen from Grace as a result of Adam's sin; and the things of this world as of little value in terms of his salvation. Natural life was thought of mainly as a preparation for man's entry into Eternity. But Renaissance thought soon began to rehabilitate man and nature. Without denying man's need for Grace, men came gradually to accept the idea that there were "goods," values, "innocent delights" to be had in the world here and now. Man himself was seen no longer as wholly vile and depraved, incapable even of desiring goodness, but rather as Shakespeare saw him in *Hamlet*:

*"What a piece of work is man! How noble in reason!
how infinite in faculty! in form and moving how
express and admirable! in action how like an angel!
in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world!
the paragon of animals!"*

It was, indeed, a very stirring time to be alive in. It was a time like spring, when promise, opportunity, challenge, and growth appeared where none had been dreamed of before. Perhaps this is why there is so much poetry of springtime in the age of Shakespeare.

Edited with Introduction and Suggestions for Study by Dr. Beryl Rowland

Notes Edited by Lucy Mabry Fitzpatrick



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AIRMONT SHAKESPEARE CLASSICS SERIES

Coriolanus

By

**William
Shakespeare**

General Introduction by Dr. David G. Pitt



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William Shakespeare: His Life, Times, and Theatre

HIS LIFE

The world's greatest poet and playwright, often called the greatest Englishman, was born in Stratford-on-Avon, Warwickshire, in the year 1564. The exact date of his birth is uncertain, but an entry in the *Stratford Parish Register* gives his baptismal date as April 26. Since children were usually baptized two or three days after birth, it is reasonable to assume that he was born on or about April 23—an appropriate day, being the feast of St. George, the patron saint of England.

His father, John Shakespeare, was a glover and dealer in wool and farm products, who had moved to Stratford from Snitterfield, four miles distant, some time before 1552. During his early years in Stratford his business prospered, enabling him to acquire substantial property, including several houses, and to take his place among the more considerable citizens of the town. In 1557 he married Mary, daughter of Robert Arden, a wealthy landowner of Wilmcote, not far from Stratford. Two daughters were born to them before William's birth—Joan, baptized in 1558, and Margaret, baptized in 1562—but both died in infancy. William was thus their third child, though the eldest of those who survived infancy. After him were born Gilbert (1566), another Joan (1569), Anne (1571), Richard (1574), and Edmund (1580).

Very little is positively known (though much is conjectured) about Shakespeare's boyhood and education. We know that for some years after William's birth his father's rise in Stratford society and municipal affairs continued. Many local offices came to him in rapid succession: ale-taster, burgess (a kind of constable), assessor of fines, chamberlain (town treasurer), high bailiff (a kind of magistrate), alderman (town councilor), and chief alderman in 1571. As the son of a man of such eminence in Stratford, Shakespeare undoubtedly attended the local Grammar School. This he was entitled to do free of charge, his father being a town councilor. No records of the school are extant, so that we do not know how good a pupil he was, nor what subjects he studied. It is probable that he covered the usual Elizabethan curriculum: an "A B C book," the catechism in Latin and English, Latin grammar, the translation of Latin authors, and perhaps some Greek grammar and translation as well. But family circumstances appear to have curtailed his formal education before it was complete, for shortly before William reached his fourteenth birthday his father's rising fortunes abruptly passed their zenith.

Although we do not know all the facts, it is apparent that about the year 1578, having gone heavily into debt, John Shakespeare lost two large farms inherited by his wife from her father. Thereafter, he was involved in a series of lawsuits, and lost his post on the Stratford town council. Matters got steadily worse for him, until finally in 1586 he was declared a bankrupt. But by this time the future poet-dramatist was already a family man himself.

In 1582, in the midst of his father's legal and finan-

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cial crises—and perhaps because of them—Shakespeare married Anne, daughter of Richard Hathaway (recently deceased) of the village of Shottery near Stratford. The *Episcopal Register* for the Diocese of Worcester contains their marriage record, dated November 28, 1582; he was then in his eighteenth year and his wife in her twenty-sixth. On May 26 of the following year the *Stratford Parish Register* recorded the baptism of their first child, Susanna; and on February 2, 1585, the baptism of a twin son and daughter named Hamnet and Judith.

These facts are all that are known of Shakespeare's early life. How he supported his family, whether he took up some trade or profession, how long he continued to live in Stratford, we do not know for certain. Tradition and conjecture have bestowed on him many interim occupations between his marriage and his appearance in London in the early fifteen-nineties: printer, dyer, traveling-player, butcher, soldier, apothecary, thief—it reads like a children's augury-rhyme (when buttons or cherry-stones are read to learn one's fate). Perhaps only the last-named "pursuit" requires some explanation. According to several accounts, one of them appearing in the first *Life* of Shakespeare by Nicholas Rowe (1709), Shakespeare fell into bad company some time after his marriage, and on several occasions stole deer from the park of Sir Thomas Lucy, a substantial gentleman of Charlecote, near Stratford. According to Rowe:

For this he was prosecuted by that gentleman, as he thought somewhat too severely; and in order to revenge that ill-usage, he made a ballad upon him and was obliged to leave his business and

family in Warwickshire, for some time, and shelter himself in London.

The story has been repeated in varying forms by most subsequent biographers, but its authenticity is doubted by many who repeat it.

Another much more attractive story, which, however, if true, does not necessarily deny the authenticity of Rowe's, is that Shakespeare during the so-called "lost years" was a schoolmaster. This, indeed, appears to be somewhat better substantiated. John Aubrey, seventeenth-century biographer and antiquary, in his *Brief Lives* (1681) declares that he had learned from a theatrical manager, whose father had known Shakespeare, that the dramatist "had been in his younger years a schoolmaster in the country." This may, then, account, in part at least, for the years between his marriage and his arrival in London about the year 1591. It is interesting to note that in two of his early plays Shakespeare includes a schoolmaster among his characters: Holofernes of *Love's Labour's Lost* and Pinch of *The Comedy of Errors*. But let us hope that neither is intended to be Shakespeare's portrait of himself!

However he may have occupied himself in the interim, we know that by 1592 he was already a budding actor and playwright in London. In that year Robert Greene in his autobiographical pamphlet *A Groatsworth of Wit*, referring to the young actors and menders of old plays who were, it seemed to him, gaining undeserved glory from the labours of their betters (both by acting their plays and by rewriting them), wrote as follows:

Yes trust them not: for there is an upstart Crow,

beautified with our feathers, that with his Tygers heart wrapt in a Players hyde, supposes he is as well able to bombast out blanke verse as the best of you: and being an absolute *Johannes factotum*, is in his owne conceit the onely Shakescene in a countrey.

“Shakescene” is clearly Shakespeare. The phrase “upstart Crow” probably refers to his country origins and his lack of university education. “Beautified with our feathers” probably means that he uses the older playwrights’ words for his own aggrandisement either in plays in which he acts or in those he writes himself. “Tygers heart wrapt in a Players hyde” is a parody of a line in *III Henry VI*, one of the earliest plays ascribed to Shakespeare. And the Latin phrase *Johannes factotum*, meaning Jack-of-all-trades, suggests that he was at this time engaged in all sorts of theatrical jobs: actor, poet, playwright, and perhaps manager as well.

Greene died shortly after making this scurrilous attack on the young upstart from Stratford, and so escaped the resentment of those he had insulted. But Henry Chettle, himself a minor dramatist, who had prepared Greene’s manuscript for the printer, in his *Kind-Harts Dreame* (1592), apologized to Shakespeare for his share in the offence.

I am as sory as if the originall fault had beene my fault, because my selfe have seene his demeanor no lesse civill, than he excelent in the qualitie he professes: Besides, divers of worship have reported his uprightness of dealing, which argues honesty, and his facetious grace in writing, that approoves his Art.

Thus, in a very indirect manner and because of an attack upon him by an irascible dying man, we learn that Shakespeare at this time was in fact held in high regard by "divers of worship," that is, by many of high birth, as an upright, honest young man of pleasant manners and manifest skill as an actor, poet, and playwright.

Although Shakespeare by 1593 had written, or written parts of, some five or six plays (*I, II, and III Henry VI, Richard III, The Comedy of Errors, and perhaps Titus Andronicus*), it was as a non-dramatic poet that he first appeared in print. *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*, long narrative poems, both bearing Shakespeare's name, were published in 1593 and 1594 respectively. But thereafter for the next twenty years he wrote almost nothing but drama. In his early period, 1591 to 1596, in addition to the plays named above, he wrote *Love's Labour's Lost, The Taming of the Shrew, Two Gentlemen of Verona, Romeo and Juliet, A Midsummer Night's Dream, Richard II, and King John*. Then followed his great middle period, 1596 to 1600, during which he wrote both comedies and history-plays: *The Merchant of Venice, I and II Henry IV, The Merry Wives of Windsor, Much Ado about Nothing, Henry V, Julius Caesar, As You Like It, and Twelfth Night*. The period of his great tragedies and the so-called "dark comedies" followed (1600-1608): *Hamlet, Troilus and Cressida, All's Well that Ends Well, Measure for Measure, Othello, King Lear, Macbeth, Antony and Cleopatra, Timon of Athens, and Coriolanus*. The last phase of his career as dramatist, 1608 to 1613, sometimes called "the period of the romances," produced *Pericles, Prince of Tyre, Cymbeline, The Winter's*

.....
Tale, The Tempest, parts of *Henry VIII*, and perhaps parts of *The Two Noble Kinsmen*. Many other plays were ascribed to him, but it is doubtful that he had a hand in any but those we have named. Long before his death in 1616 his name held such magic for the public that merely to print it on the title page of any play assured its popular acclaim. The "upstart Crow" had come a long way since 1592.

He had come a long way too from the economic straits that may well have driven him to London many years before. We know, for example, from the records of tax assessments that by 1596 Shakespeare was already fairly well-to-do. This is further borne out by his purchasing in the following year a substantial house known as New Place and an acre of land in Stratford for £60, a sizable sum in those days. In 1602 he made a further purchase of 107 acres at Stratford for £320, and a cottage and more land behind his estate at New Place. But his life during this time was not quite unclouded. His only son, Hamnet, died in 1596 at the age of eleven years, his father in 1601, and his mother in 1608. All three were buried in Stratford. More happily he saw, in 1607, the marriage of his daughter Susanna to Dr. John Hall, an eminent physician of Stratford, and, in the following year, the baptism of his granddaughter, Elizabeth Hall.

Shakespeare's retirement to Stratford appears to have been gradual, but by 1613, if not earlier, he seems to have settled there, though he still went up to London occasionally. Of the last months of his life we know little. We do know that in February, 1616, his second daughter, Judith, married Thomas Quiney. We know that on March 25, apparently already ill,

Shakespeare revised and signed his will, among other bequests leaving to his wife his "second best bed with the furniture." A month later he was dead, *dying on his fifty-second birthday*, April 23, 1616. He was buried in the chancel of Holy Trinity Church, Stratford, on April 26.

HIS TIMES

Shakespeare lived during the English Renaissance, that age of transition that links the Mediaeval and the Modern world. Inheriting the rich traditions of the Middle Ages in art, learning, religion, and politics, rediscovering the great legacies of classical culture, the men of the Renaissance went on to new and magnificent achievements in every phase of human endeavour. No other period in history saw such varied and prolific development and expansion. And the reign of Elizabeth I (1558-1603), Shakespeare's age, was the High Renaissance in England.

Development and expansion—these are the watchwords of the age, and they apply to every aspect of life, thought, and activity. The universe grew in immensity as men gradually abandoned the old Ptolemaic view of a finite, earth-centered universe, accepting the enormous intellectual challenge of the illimitable cosmos of Copernicus's theory and Galileo's telescope. The earth enlarged, too, as more of its surface was discovered and charted by explorers following the lead of Columbus, Cabot, Magellan, and Vespucci. England itself expanded as explorers and colonizers, such as Frobisher, Davis, Gilbert, Raleigh, Grenville, Drake, and others, carried the English flag into many distant lands and seas; as

English trade and commerce expanded with the opening of new markets and new sources of supply; as English sea power grew to protect the trading routes and fend off rivals, particularly Spain, the defeat of whose Invincible Armada in 1588 greatly advanced English national pride at home, and power and prestige abroad.

The world of ideas changed and expanded, too. The rediscovery and reinterpretation of the classics, with their broad and humane view of life, gave a new direction and impetus to secular education. During the Middle Ages theology had dominated education; but now the language, literature, and philosophy of the ancient world, the practical arts of grammar, logic, and rhetoric, and training in morals, manners, and gymnastics assumed the major roles in both school and university—in other words, an education that fitted one for life in the world here and now replaced one that looked rather to the life hereafter. Not that the spiritual culture of man was neglected. Indeed, it took on a new significance, for as life in this world acquired new meaning and value, religion assumed new functions, and new vitality to perform them, as the bond between the Creator and a new kind of creation.

It was, of course, the old creation—man and nature—but it was undergoing great changes. Some of these we have already seen, but the greatest was in man's conception of himself and his place in nature. The Mediaeval view of man was generally not an exalted one. It saw him as more or less depraved, fallen from Grace as a result of Adam's sin; and the things of this world, which was also "fallen," as of little value in terms of his salvation. Natural life was thought of

mainly as a preparation for man's entry into Eternity. But Renaissance thought soon began to rehabilitate man, nature, and the things of this life. Without denying man's need for Grace and the value of the means of salvation provided by the Church, men came gradually to accept the idea that there were "goods," values, "innocent delights" to be had in the world here and now, and that God had given them for man to enjoy. Man himself was seen no longer as wholly vile and depraved, incapable even of desiring goodness, but rather as Shakespeare saw him in *Hamlet*:

What a piece of work is man! how noble in reason!
how infinite in faculty! in form and moving how
express and admirable! in action how like an angel!
in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the
world! the paragon of animals!

And this is the conception of man that permeates Elizabethan thought and literature. It does not mean that man is incorruptible, immune to moral weakness and folly. Shakespeare has his villains, cowards, and fools. But man is none of these by nature; they are distortions of the true form of man. Nature framed him for greatness, endowed him with vast capacities for knowledge, achievement, and delight, and with aspirations that may take him to the stars. "O brave new world, That has such people in 't!"

The chief object of man's aspiring mind is now the natural world, whose "wondrous architecture," says Marlowe's Tamburlaine, our souls strive ceaselessly to comprehend, "Still climbing after knowledge infinite." Hamlet, too, speaks of "this goodly frame, the earth

..... this brave o'erhanging firmament, this majestical roof fretted with golden fire." No longer the ruins of a fallen paradise and the devil's, nature is seen as man's to possess, her beauty and wonder to be sought after and enjoyed, her energies to be controlled and used—as Bacon expressed it, "for the glory of the Creator and the relief of man's estate."

It was, indeed, a very stirring time to be alive in. New vistas were breaking upon the human mind and imagination everywhere. It was a time like spring, when promise, opportunity, challenge and growth appeared where none had been dreamed of before. Perhaps this is why there is so much poetry of spring-time in the age of Shakespeare.

HIS THEATRE

There were many theatres, or playhouses, in Shakespeare's London. The first was built in 1576 by James Burbage and was called the *Theatre*. It was built like an arena, with a movable platform at one end, and had no seats in the pit, but had benches in the galleries that surrounded it. It was built of wood, and cost about £200. Other famous playhouses of Shakespeare's time, for the most part similarly constructed, included the Curtain, the Bull, the Rose, the Swan, the Fortune, and, most famous of them all, the Globe. It was built in 1599 by the sons of James Burbage, and it was here that most of Shakespeare's plays were performed. Since more is known about the Globe than most of the others, I shall use it as the basis of the brief account that follows of the Elizabethan playhouse.

As its name suggests, the Globe was a circular structure (the second Globe, built in 1614 after the first burned down, was octagonal), and was open to the sky, somewhat like a modern football or baseball stadium, though much smaller. It had three tiers of galleries surrounding the central "yard" or pit, and a narrow roof over the top gallery. But most interesting from our viewpoint was the stage—or rather *stages*—which was very different from that of most modern theatres. These have the familiar "picture-frame" stage: a raised platform at one end of the auditorium, framed by curtains and footlights, and viewed only from the front like a picture. Shakespeare's stage was very different.

The main stage, or *apron* as it was called, jutted well out into the pit, and did not extend all the way across from side to side. There was an area on either side for patrons to sit or stand in, so that actors performing on the apron could be viewed from three sides instead of one. In addition there was an inner stage, a narrow rectangular recess let into the wall behind the main stage. When not in use it could be closed by a curtain drawn across in front; when open it could be used for interior scenes, arbor scenes, tomb and anteroom scenes and the like. On either side of this inner stage were doors through which the main stage was entered. Besides the inner and outer stages, there were no fewer than four other areas where the action of the play, or parts of it, might be performed. Immediately above the inner stage, and corresponding to it in size and shape, was another room with its front exposed. This was the upper stage, and was used for upstairs scenes, or for storage

when not otherwise in use. In front of this was a narrow railed gallery, which could be used for balcony scenes, or ones requiring the walls of a castle or the ramparts of a fortress. On either side of it and on the same level was a window-stage, so-called because it consisted of a small balcony enclosed by windows that opened on hinges. This permitted actors to stand inside and speak from the open windows to others on the main stage below. In all it was a very versatile multiple stage and gave the dramatist and producer much more freedom in staging than most modern theatres afford. It is interesting to note that some of the new theatres today have revived certain of the features of the Elizabethan stage.

Very little in the way of scenery and backdrops was used. The dramatist's words and the imagination of the audience supplied the lack of scenery. No special lighting effects were possible since plays were performed in the daylight that streamed in through the unroofed top of the three-tiered enclosure that was the playhouse. Usually a few standard stage props were on hand: trestles and boards to form a table, benches and chairs, flagons, an altar, artificial trees, weapons, a man's severed head, and a few other items. Costumes were usually elaborate and gorgeous, though no attempt was made to reproduce the dress of the time and place portrayed in the play.

Play production in Shakespeare's time was clearly very different from that of ours, but we need have no doubts about the audience's response to what they saw and heard on stage. They came, they saw, and the dramatist conquered, for they kept coming back for more and more. And despite the opposition that

the theatre encountered from Puritans and others, who thought it the instrument of Satan, the theatre in Shakespeare's time flourished as one of the supreme glories of a glorious age.

—DAVID G. PITT

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INTRODUCTION TO *Coriolanus*

THE TEXT AND ITS SOURCE

Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* was originally printed in the *First Folio* of 1623 and we have no record of when it was first acted. Most editors assume that it was written after the beginning of 1605 because Menenius' fable of the belly and its members is indebted not only to the seventh of Plutarch's *Lives*, the principal source of the play, but to Camden's *Remaines concerning Britaine* which was published in that year. It was probably written before 1610 because Ben Jonson's play, *The Silent Woman*, acted in that year contains the remark: "Well, Dauphine, you have lurch'd your friends of the better halfe of the garland." The same idiomatic use of "lurch" occurs also in *Coriolanus*, Act II, scene ii, where Cominius describes how Coriolanus robbed all warriors of the victor's wreath: "He lunched all swords of the garland." That Jonson expected his audience to recognize the parallel suggests that *Coriolanus* had already enjoyed a number of performances. Other considerations support the contention that the play followed close on *Antony and Cleopatra* (1607) for which Plutarch's *Lives*, as translated by Sir Thomas North from the French version by Jacques Amyot, was also the chief source.

The play bears every evidence of Shakespeare's artistic maturity. Its language is powerful, com-

pressed and expressive. There is a strong feeling of social framework and reference throughout. The conflict is palpably dramatic with the dynamic hero appearing in a series of lively scenes which build up to a forceful emotional climax. Even reading the play one knows that it must be good theater.

Yet it has had what might be called a bad press. The great critic E. K. Chambers felt that Shakespeare had become tedious. He thought he detected "the exhaustion of a mood." In his view, "the tragedy claims admiration and respect for the dignity of its planning and the justice of its thought; but it lacks variety and decorative quality, and the inexhaustible buoyancy of its predecessors gives way to deliberate and purposed effort." Few would now agree with the nature of his criticism or even with the premises implied, but more recently Harold C. Goddard justly observed that *Coriolanus* was possibly Shakespeare's most neglected play, rarely staged and probably seldom read, except by scholars and students.

The reason is that Shakespeare is concerned here with unpalatable truths and, contrary to his usual practice, he provides no relief: he includes neither good guys nor comedians, only humanity with its despicable ambitions and lack of faith. Bewilderment about a hero who seems harsh to the point of grotesqueness, assumptions that Aufidius' behavior is inconsistent, or excuses for the undemocratic political concepts which arise inexorably from the text, are simply the result of modern critical naïveté.

THE DRAMATIST'S INTENTION

We would agree that Shakespeare was probably attracted to the story because of its dramatic possibili-

ties. The hero was a paradox: a man of uncompromising integrity, lacking, it would seem, both the tender qualities and the petty failings of lesser men, yet becoming a traitor and then, in turn, betraying his new allies because of the warmth of family ties. Here was a new challenge of a difficult kind and it could be worked out in scenes of tremendous theatrical potential. An indisputable guide to Shakespeare's intentions is his modification of his source.

Shakespeare saw the story as drama whereas Plutarch was recounting it as history. The different perspective immediately elevated the position of Volumentia and made her important throughout. The domestic thread, introduced by Plutarch only to explain Coriolanus' final *volte-face*, unifies the entire action, and it is the clash of wills between mother and son which provides the culmination for the two distinct movements in the play. Similar dramatic considerations led Shakespeare to develop the characters of Menenius and Aufidius out of hints in Plutarch and to condense Coriolanus' children into the form of young Marcius who chases butterflies.

But while these and further modifications, such as reducing several mob uprisings into one, are an obvious part of dramatic strategy, others are not. Shakespeare had little authority for representing the citizens as cowardly in battle, as excessively vacillating and greedy for booty. While accepting the clash of interests between the plebeians and the patricians as inevitable, Plutarch took the view that the citizens were moved to folly or violence by the demagogues and that Coriolanus' repressive measures were unwise. He was describing a struggle for power which he saw as an essential part of the democratic process;

his account reflects a way of life not conceived of in the Elizabethan world picture with its hierarchical structure of society and its horror of mob rule.

The nature of Shakespeare's alterations in this area are vital to our understanding of the play. According to J. Dover Wilson, Shakespeare's

"own general standpoint is rendered sufficiently clear by the conspicuous position he gives to Menenius' 'pretty tale'. Whereas Plutarch introduced it incidentally and as one of the 'persuasions' that 'pacified the people', implying at the same time that the permission to elect tribunes weighed much more with them, Shakespeare places it at the very forefront of his play, since it expressed the point of view of all right-minded persons in his audience about the issue between the populace and the nobility in general, a point of view in fact that held the field in political economy down to the nineteenth century."

There is no doubt that to the Elizabethans Menenius' fable of the body and its members was a further enunciation of the concept of an ordered structure of society, of the ideas expressed by Ulysses in his well-known speech on degree in *Troilus and Cressida*. In *Coriolanus*, Menenius harangues the mob thus:

There was a time when all the body's members
 Rebelled against the Belly; then accused it:
 That only like a gulf it did remain
 I' th' midst o' th' body, idle and unactive,
 Still cupboarding the viand, never bearing
 Like labour with the rest; where th' other instruments

Did see and hear, devise, instruct, walk, feel,
And, mutually participate, did minister
Unto the appetite and affection common
Of the whole body. The Belly answered—
. . . With a kind of smile,
Which ne'er came from the lungs, but even thus—
For, look you, I may make the Belly smile
As well as speak—it tauntingly replied
To th' discontented members, the mutinous parts
That envied his receipt; even so most fitly
As you malign our senators for that
They are not such as you.

In the circumstances, with the citizens agitating “in hunger for bread, not in thirst for revenge,” Menenius’ long-winded speech appears to us as the most callous sophistry made even more explicit a few lines earlier:

I tell you, friends, most charitable care
Have the patricians of you. For your wants
Your suffering in this dearth, you may as well
Strike at the heaven with your staves as lift them
Against the Roman state.

Point of View

But what point of view did the dramatist intend? The mode of presentation and the obvious irony in that the speech comes from one “that hath always loved the people” must make us hesitate to ascribe Menenius’ attitude to the dramatist. The belly replies “with a kind of smile which ne’er came from the lungs.” Apparently the smile is insincere, taunting. The patricians, represented by the belly, are the epitome of greed, contemptuous and confident of their power.

The truth is that the vision of the dramatist transcends the conception on which his own society is based. Yet it is a vision which is uncompromising and totally devoid of the cathartic serenity of his final plays. Caroline Spurgeon and, more recently, Maurice Charney in *Shakespeare's Roman Plays*, have remarked on the multiplicity of food images in *Coriolanus* as well as of images of food or disease. Indeed, the conflict is organized around imagery of food and eating. The citizens are represented both as devourers of and as items of food; Coriolanus would oppose them with war which would devour the devourers, but more importantly he sees abstinence as the aristocratic ideal. The contrast is nowhere more clearly drawn than in Act II, scene iii, where the First Citizen is concerned with corn while Coriolanus in his gown of humility asserts that a noble starvation is preferable to soliciting plebeians for their support:

Better it is to die, better to starve,

Than crave the hire which first we do deserve.

Yet the dramatist remains uncommitted to either action and we would be mistaken if we regarded this play as being a political treatise. The *welt-politik* is far more than background because the paradox central to Coriolanus' character is reflected in the broader issues of the play: the ironies of the struggle for power.

THE TRAGIC HERO

For his purpose Shakespeare had no need to alter the character of Coriolanus as given by Plutarch. Coriolanus was, moreover, perfectly adapted to the traditional conception of tragedy as being the fall of

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a great man. The classical flaw which occasions it is that of Lucifer himself: it is *hubris*, and it is Coriolanus' haughty and imperious temperament which Plutarch also stresses at the beginning of his account.

Shakespeare underlines the flaw in the first scene: "He pays himself with being proud," says the First Citizen. "Was ever man so proud as is this Marcius?" asks Sicinius and the other tribune, Brutus, concurs: "He is grown/ Too proud to be so valiant." Without taking sides in the *welt-politik*, Shakespeare shows what can happen to a man temperamentally unsuited to cope with the issues such a structured society raises. Coriolanus inevitably brings to the body politic the uncompromising set of values which serve him so well in battle. Against the enemy he is right, his opponents are wrong and must be destroyed. The tragic irony is that such a concept destroys balance, a sense of accepted values; it becomes easier for him to embrace a former enemy in the field than a plebeian within the gate.

While the qualities essential for the tragedy are inherent in Plutarch's portrait, Shakespeare's modification of certain incidents indicates that he conceives of Coriolanus' character as being deeply complex. He alters and even renders less dramatic the incident which after the battle of Corioli particularly endeared Coriolanus to the people, with the apparent intention of illustrating the limitations of his hero's humanity. According to Plutarch, Coriolanus asked for a single share of the booty instead of the one tenth offered him and demanded as a favor that a rich Volscian whose guest he had been should be saved from slavery. This generous gesture occasioned wild acclaim even from Coriolanus' enemies. In Act I,

.....
scene ix, Coriolanus makes a similar request, but the man is a poor one:

I sometime lay here in Corioli
And at a poor man's house; he used me kindly.
He cried to me; I saw him prisoner;
But then Aufidius was within my view,
And wrath o'erwhelmed my pity. I request you
To give my poor host freedom.

His good intentions come to nothing because he cannot remember the man's name and the next minute he dismisses the subject and calls for wine.

In Plutarch Coriolanus accepted the duties of a nominee without revulsion. Suing for office, he did not, like Shakespeare's hero, refuse to show his wounds to the people. The plebeians first supported and then rejected him on clear political grounds: they were impressed with him as a war-hero, but they disliked the enthusiasm with which the patricians were pushing their candidate. It was after this that corn arrived and Coriolanus argued against the proposed distribution to the mob, and censured those who spoke in favor of the commonalty. His violent opposition was particularly well motivated inasmuch as he was smarting under his recent rebuff. Impeachment followed. Shakespeare's handling of the same incident stresses the uncompromising dislike of Coriolanus for the masses, the fickleness of the mob and the power of the demagogues. The incident of the corn is referred to obliquely as being in the past. It is Coriolanus' assertion that the citizens were cowardly in war and did not deserve free corn which triggers off the fury of the tribunes. His emotional response forces him to react to the jibes of the tribunes as they

intended he should. The hatred which he has of the plebeians and the compulsion which he has to express it even at the risk of his own life is made to seem pathological.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PLAY

The play falls into two parts, with the climactic action of the first foreshadowing that of the second, providing a kind of dress-rehearsal for it. The demarcation occurs in the first scene of Act IV when Coriolanus leaves Rome. The action of the first part is a simplification of incidents narrated by Plutarch. The citizens clamor for corn. Coriolanus advocates harsh resistance to their demands. War makes him a hero and a likely candidate for the consulship; his own contempt and hatred of the plebeians and the forensic ability of his enemies cause him to be charged as a traitor. His mother persuades him to humble himself to answer the charges but his angry behavior plays into the hands of the tribunes and he is exiled. In the second part Coriolanus again pursues a headstrong course and once more allows his mother to dissuade him. His behavior among the Volscians closely parallels that which has led to his banishment from Rome. This time the issues are larger than himself, and, to a man never able to restrain his own destructive *hubris*, the tragic end is inevitable.

THE RELATIONSHIP OF CHARACTER

The play is called *The Tragedy of Coriolanus* and Coriolanus is central to it from the beginning. Even before he enters we learn that he is the chief enemy of the people and that his actions are motivated

partly by pride and partly by a wish to please his mother. The suggestion of emotional instability is confirmed when he enters with a volley of insults, with a diatribe which is to be explained on the grounds not of political naïveté but of uncontrollable passion. The norm is either Menenius who shares his political persuasions but knows how to dissemble, argue benignly and discomfort a ring-leader or it is the citizens who behave spontaneously according to the information put before them. Yet Coriolanus' impulsion involves more than a pathological contempt for the masses. His *hubris* has components which can seem worthy: uncompromising honesty and insistence on truth-to-self regardless of consequence. Yet in contentious issues it is pride which prompts the disastrous honesty. Parts of the case history are missing but the third scene amplifies the psychological causes which were hinted at in Plutarch. Coriolanus has been molded by his mother, Volumnia, who rejoices in his military exploits. His wife, Virgilia, is gentle yet perceptive, horrified at the thought of bloodshed. Valeria stands in between—a woman of spirit but not overly sensitive. It is left to her in her role of family friend to make a comment which best illuminates Coriolanus' character. In Act I, scene iii, she describes how she has seen Coriolanus' young son pursue a butterfly for sheer enjoyment, then, in an inexplicable fit of rage, instead of releasing it, as he had previously done, he tears it to pieces:

O' my word, the father's son: I'll swear 'tis a very pretty boy. O' my troth, I looked upon him o' Wednesday half an hour together: has such a confirmed countenance! I saw him run after a gilded

butterfly; and when he caught it, he let it go again; and after it again; and over and over he comes, and up again; caught it again: or whether his fall enraged him, or how 'twas, he did so set his teeth, and tear it; O, I warrant, how he mam-mocked it!

The reactions of the two women closest to Coriolanus are significant. Volumnia picks up Valeria's contention that Marcius resembles his father and observes complacently:

One on's father's moods.

Virgilia, however, remarks:

A crack, madam.

To her there is a flaw here and it is a flaw which we see in Coriolanus. He pursues honor instead of a gilded butterfly, but destroys it through a senseless rage. He never grows up, continues to equate martial reputation with maturity and dies disclaiming the truth; not knowing himself.

'Boy'! False hound!

If you have writ your annals true, 'tis there,
That, like an eagle in a dove-cote, I
Fluttered your Volscians in Corioli.
Alone I did it. 'Boy'!

Contrary to his custom, Shakespeare provides no full recognition, no anagnorisis in this tragedy.

Coriolanus, Aufidius observes in the last scene of Act IV, has "spices" of three qualities, pride, defective judgment and intolerance, and it was one of these qualities which made him "feared,/ So hated,

and so banished." Coleridge contended that this penetrating speech was out of character. But it is the same man who finally shows up Coriolanus' immaturity. Aufidius himself is prepared to welcome Coriolanus as a friend and dispose of him when he has no further use for him. He is always governed by expediency:

One fire drives out one fire; one nail, one nail.

Power fails, he remarks in the speech in which he analyzes the conduct and reputation of Coriolanus, because it inevitably stirs up another power to oppose it. His view is realistic:

. . . So our virtues
Lie in th'interpretation of the time.

This can mean that our virtues are at the mercy of contemporary interpretation or that virtues are only virtues according to the evaluation put on them at the time. It is the latter interpretation which is meaningful because we find that in this play there are no absolute standards for the protagonists. What Coriolanus sees himself as possessing is a quality which in the "interpretation of the time" he tragically lacks—an undeviating integrity. He is surrounded by realists whose actions are motivated by an undeviating pragmatism.

The two tribunes, Sicinius and Brutus, are power seekers, justifiably fearful of what Coriolanus would do if he became consul, thoroughly unscrupulous in their manipulation of both the mob and Coriolanus. Menenius justly castigates their pride:

You talk of pride. O that you could turn your eyes

toward the napes of your necks, and make but an interior survey of your good selves! O that you could!

They are masters of the demagogic arts. Says Sicinius:

Assemble presently the people hither:

And when they hear me say 'It shall be so

I' th' right and strength o' th' commons,' be it either

For death, for fine, or banishment, then let them,

If I say 'Fine', cry 'Finel' if 'Death', cry 'Death!'

Insisting on the old prerogative

And power i' th' truth o' th' cause.

Only Menenius can outdo them. Like the tribunes, he provokes our sympathy for Coriolanus, but for a different reason. A realist himself, adept at handling politicians, he is constant in his regard for Coriolanus and will even resort to the most facile explanation in order to excuse him. Yet his commentary on the action and his own flexibility serve to emphasize Coriolanus' own alienation as well as to demonstrate that he, too, is governed by expediency. The proviso in Act III, scene ii, when Coriolanus is asked to humble himself, illustrates his personality:

Before he should thus stoop to th' herd—but that

The violent fit o' th' time craves it as physic

For the whole state—I would put mine armour on,

Which I can scarcely bear.

Menenius says that he is known to be "a humorous patrician." He is no more so than Polonius and his hearty manner conceals a hypocrite and a bore. As a go-between, he is verbose and ineffectual, and both his attitude and that of the tribunes increases our

sympathy for the citizens. Fickle the mob may be, but they are unscrupulously handled and have a genuine grievance. Shakespeare depicts them unsentimentally and realistically.

"Anger's my meat," observes Volumnia, and it is her character which gives direction to the play. She differs from her son in that, as she admits, she has "a brain that leads my use of anger/to better vantage." She glories in bloodshed and equates martial prowess with honor. Her control over her son is absolute. "He must, and will," she declares to Cominius when she has been persuading Coriolanus to return to the tribunes. She is certain even before he has made up his mind. Her manipulation is so confident that when he finally agrees to do what she wants she can say: "Do your will." It is the same affectation of independence which finally sways him to capitulate and sue for peace between the Romans and the Volscians. She, too, is a warrior.

Down, ladies; let us shame him with our knees.
To his surname Coriolanus 'longs more pride
Than pity to our prayers. Down: an end;
This is the last: so we will home to Rome,
And die among our neighbours. Nay, behold's!
This boy, that cannot tell what he would have,
But kneels and holds up hands for fellowship,
Does reason our petition with more strength
Than thou hast to deny 't. Come, let us go:
This fellow had a Volscian to his mother;
His wife is in Corioli, and his child
Like him by chance. Yet give us our dispatch.
I am hushed until our city be a-fire,
And then I'll speak a little.

How well she knows her son! Already she has admitted "there's no man in the world/ More bound to 's mother," and he proves that he is more attached to her than to life itself.

Coriolanus' son, Marcius, speaks only two lines in the entire play. We have already referred to his thematic significance. His presence in Act V, scene iii, we are made to feel aware, offers powerful argument:

My young boy
Hath an aspect of intercession which
Great Nature cries 'Deny not.'

It is his supplication which Volumnia uses as her final appeal to Coriolanus.

Virgilia's role, though minor, is consistent and impressive. In Act I, scene iii, she refuses to share Volumnia's exaltation of martial courage, she persists in her decision to remain at home until her husband returns, and the occasional acerbity of her mother-in-law does not disturb her amiability. At the triumphant home-coming of Coriolanus in Act II, scene i, she has only three lines, but while Volumnia gloats over Coriolanus' wounds, her silence is itself meaningful. Only on one occasion does distress goad her into angry comment. Characteristically, it is also brief: the banished Coriolanus, she tells the tribunes, would make an end of Sicinius' posterity. The relationship between her and her husband, though limited to short exchanges in two scenes, is memorable. On the first occasion Coriolanus is tenderly ironic:

My gracious silence, hail!

Wouldst thou have laughed had I come coffined home,
That weep'st to see me triumph?

The second exchange is a great moment in the play. Coriolanus describes his reactions as the women in mourning garb and his little son come towards him to sue for peace. "What is that curtsy worth? or those dove's eyes" he remarks as he struggles to repress his feelings. Virgilia speaks briefly twice and the next moment he is embracing her.

The movement foreshadows the turning point. For an instant Coriolanus shows that he is not alone. He acknowledges his wife as "best of my flesh," and in his final yielding he is, according to the stage directions, to hold his mother "by the hand silent." The gesture marks the end of Coriolanus' isolation. It shows him to be a man like other men, and, for a brief moment, accepting the fact of his humanity.

LANGUAGE AND MEANING

The extensive imagery of food, disease, and animals has already been noted. Coriolanus compares himself to "a lonely dragon," and the word "alone" is repeated more often in *Coriolanus* than in any other play of Shakespeare. The other characters are in groups or pairs: the citizens, the tribunes, the women, Menenius and Cominius. Even Aufidius has his lieutenant and, finally, his conspirators. But the "solitariness" which Plutarch associated with willful pride dominates Coriolanus' spiritual and physical life. When the Volscians retreat, Coriolanus follows them and gets cut off in Corioli "himself alone." References are made to this situation throughout the play and when Coriolanus finally reminds Aufidius

how he "fluttered" his Volscians he remarks: "Alone, I did it." This isolation which is, at times, related to images that make it seem god-like, culminates in brutal destruction. Aufidius stands on the body of Coriolanus. Volumnia's earlier vision of her son:—"He'll beat Aufidius' head below his knee/ And tread upon his neck."—is ironically reversed.

The Volscian lords protest both the killing and 'Aufidius' symbolic gesture. Their reaction is linked to a matter of prime consideration of the play: the importance of human relationships. On this subject, one of the common folk in an earlier scene makes a paradoxical and illuminating comment: War, says a humble serving man, is preferable to peace because when there is no war men "then less need one another."

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STUDY QUESTIONS

ACT I

1. In *Menenius* Shakespeare portrays an average member of the privileged classes. What is the reason for his popularity with the masses?
2. Examine carefully *Menenius*' fable of the belly. Is the prevailing tone pejorative, suggesting greed, satiety or sluggishness? What implications is Shakespeare making here on the state of society?
3. The reasons which *Coriolanus* gives for his contempt of the masses is that they have no liking for war, fall short of his own high standards of bravery, and are fickle in temperament. Consider the presentation of his evidence and the relative merits of his motivation as stated by himself and by others.
4. In the third scene how does Shakespeare show clearly the contrasting values of *Volumnia* and *Virgilia*?
5. How does *Coriolanus*' speech to his renegade soldiers before *Corioli* echo attitudes and images already expressed in the first scene?
6. In the moment of triumph *Coriolanus* again emphasizes the cowardice of his soldiers. There is little authority for this representation in *Plutarch*. Why does Shakespeare choose to denigrate the soldiers here?
7. At the conclusion of the first act *Coriolanus* is at the height of his success and popularity. What

indications are given both of Coriolanus' virtues and of his shortcomings?

ACT II

1. In the first scene the fortunes of Coriolanus are at their zenith. What forebodings have already been introduced and how are these developed?
2. The two tribunes have always invoked the wrath of the critics. Samuel Johnson referred to their 'plebeian malignity and tribunitian insolence.' What evidence could you produce to defend their conduct?
3. What further characteristics of Menenius emerge in this act?
4. What effect does the shortness of the act give to the action?
5. What are the predominant characteristics of the citizens?

ACT III

1. In the first scene Coriolanus upbraids the tribunes when he hears that the citizens have changed their minds. Both parties use images connected with disease and sickness. What anticipations have there been of this imagery? How is it to be related to Menenius' contention that Coriolanus has a disease which must be cured rather than cut out?
2. Consider the significance of Brutus' remark that Coriolanus speaks "of the people" as if he were "a god to punish, not/ A man of their infirmity." What evidence do you have to support this insight into Coriolanus' character?
3. Volumnia, like her son, talks a great deal about honor. Do you consider that her particular con-

- ception of it, which is made explicit in time of political crisis, differs from that of her son?
4. What is the role of Menenius in the same scene (ii)?
 5. What timeless demagogic tactics are employed by Brutus and Sicinius?
 6. In scene v we have the feeling that Coriolanus is being manipulated, that he is a free man when he disregards the advice of his mother and friends, and reaches true heroic stature. By what means is point of view established here?
 7. Note the language in this climactic scene. What are the predominant effects of the imagery in Coriolanus' speeches and how is the imagery used to show mounting tension?

ACT IV

1. Is Coriolanus' parting speech to his family before he leaves Rome an intentional concealment of his plan to ally with Aufidius? Is it simply a statement that he intends to remain unchanged, despite his expulsion, as a man of strength and honor? Or is it a frank defiant assertion that he has already made up his mind to demonstrate his martial prowess?
2. What is the intention and the effect of the interchange between Volumnia and the tribunes?
3. What is the dramatic function of the meeting between a Roman and a Volscian?
4. Consider Aufidius' speech of welcome. How does the fact that he expresses his pleasure at the sight of Coriolanus in terms of his own emotions in love assist us in estimating Aufidius' own character?

5. What light does the interchange of the serving men throw
- a) on the immediate events?
 - b) on the theme of the play?
6. The scene in Rome has the function of intensifying the suspense by means of lively dialogue in which the dominant characteristics of the protagonists are further emphasized. Examine the speeches of Cominius. What is the significance of the metaphors which he uses to describe Coriolanus' action?
7. Aufidius' lyrical enthusiasm for his new comrade gives way to a jealousy which is to lead to treachery. How has Shakespeare prepared us for this dichotomy and how does it tie in with the division which is central to the dramatic experience?

ACT V

1. Cominius and Menenius intercede with Coriolanus in vain. Yet there are indications that he knows that he is in danger of relenting. What are these?
2. What is the meaning of the sudden shifts of style and imagery in the scene in which Coriolanus capitulates?
3. By his own admission Coriolanus appears to be once more under his mother's dominion when he cries:

O mother, mother!

What have you done?

In the next scene Menenius gives her full credit for Coriolanus' change of heart. What contribution do Virgilia and her son make in the capitulation scene?

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4. When Coriolanus falls to the daggers of Aufidius' hired killers, we feel that he has heroic stature. We know that he was aware that his "betrayal" of the Volscians would mean his death, and his returning to Corioli was an act of supreme courage. Shakespeare has clearly shown the dual natures of both Aufidius and Coriolanus. How does the final action evoke comparison between them which further enhances the stature of Coriolanus?
 5. What are the two accusations which most incense Coriolanus in this final scene, and how have they reverberated thematically throughout the play?
 6. *Coriolanus*, like *Hamlet*, is a tragedy of revenge and both heroes die after an outburst of fury, Hamlet finally kills the King: Coriolanus presents himself to be killed. Coriolanus, great warrior as he is, does not even choose to sell his life dearly. Why?

GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. One critic describes Coriolanus as "essentially the splendid oaf, who has never come to maturity." Would you agree with the assessment or are there qualities in the hero which demand a more comprehensive definition?
2. Consider the extensive imagery of food in the play. The patrician-plebeian class conflict is expressed in terms of it. Abstinence is associated with true nobility; appetite with baseness. What contribution does this kind of imagery make to the mood and tone of the play?
3. According to John Palmer in *Political Characters of Shakespeare* (1945), "the people smell worse in Coriolanus than anywhere else and it is not therefore surprising that this play has been most called in evidence for Shakespeare's dislike of the masses." From an examination of the imagery of the play determine whether the first part of the quotation is true. From tone and point of view accompanying such imagery, what *Weltanschauung* (world view) does Shakespeare intend us to have?
4. Consider the origins and merits of the political dispute which determines the action of the play. To what extent is Menenius' fable of the belly and its members intended to establish our point of view? Would you say that Shakespeare impartially presents this secular struggle between the few and the many?

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5. Some critics consider that Coriolanus underwent a psychological change as the result of his brooding in exile, and that when he left Rome he had no intention of going to Aufidius' camp. Do you feel that Coriolanus' action needs to be explained in this way or has Shakespeare prepared us by showing us an instability inherent in Coriolanus' character?
 6. Aristotle saw the tragic hero as an illustrious man, neither villainous nor exceptionally virtuous, moving from prosperity to adversity through frailty or some error of judgment. Consider the extent to which Shakespeare's hero conforms to this definition.

CORIO LANUS

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

CAIUS MARCIUS, *afterwards* CAIUS MARCIUS CORIO LANUS,
noble Roman.

TITUS LARTIUS, }
COMINIUS, } *generals against the Volscians.*

MENENIUS AGRIPPA, *friend to Coriolanus.*

SICINIUS VELUTUS, }
JUNIUS BRUTUS, } *tribunes of the people.*

YOUNG MARCIUS, *son to Coriolanus.*

A ROMAN HERALD.

TULLUS AUFIDIUS, *general of the Volscians.*

LIEUTENANT *to Aufidius.*

CONSPIRATORS *with Aufidius.*

A CITIZEN OF ANTIUM.

TWO VOLSCIAN GUARDS.

VOLUMNIA, *mother to Coriolanus.*

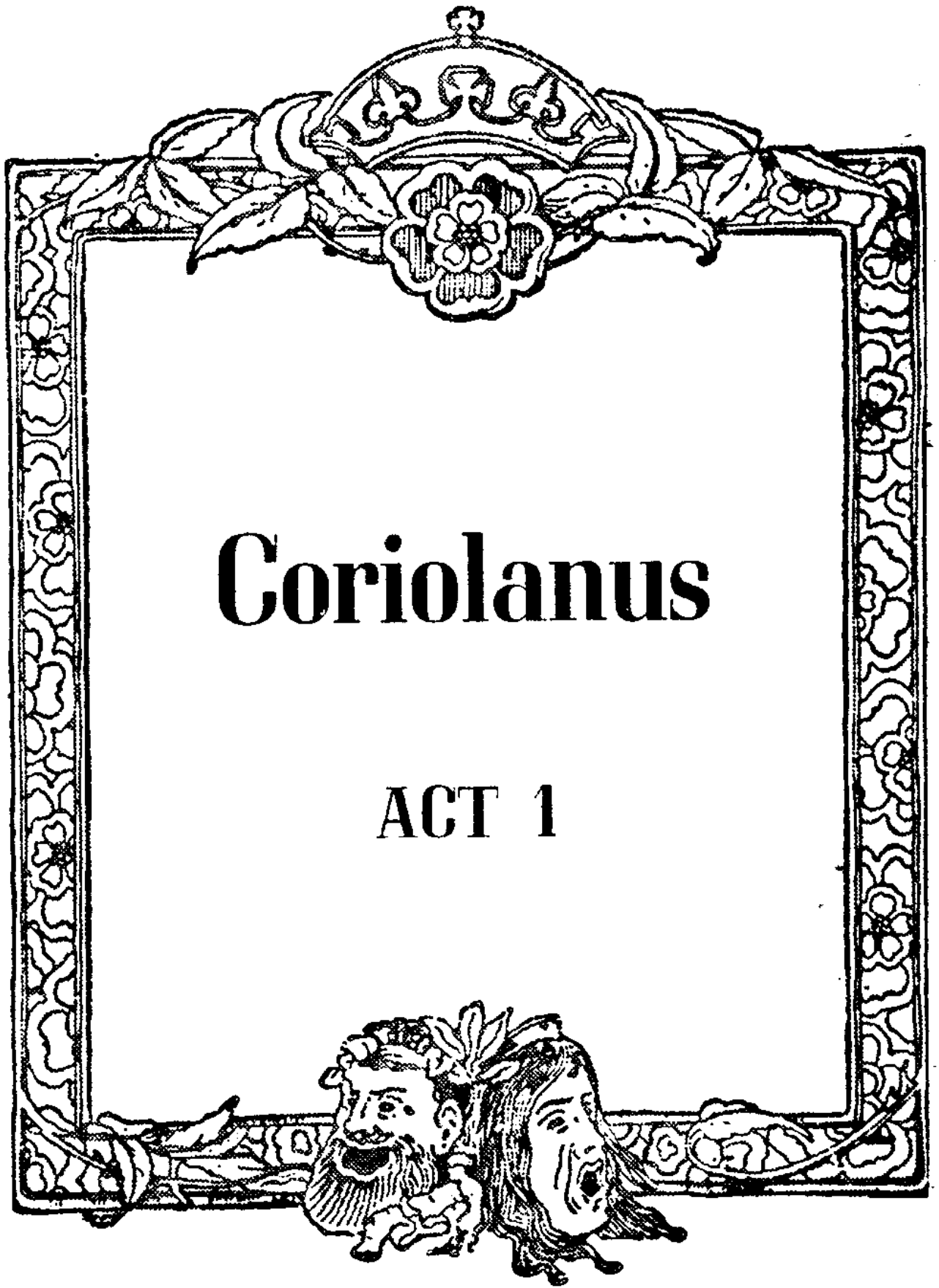
VIRGILIA, *wife to Coriolanus.*

VALERIA, *friend to Virgilia.*

GENTLEWOMAN *attending on Virgilia.*

ROMAN *and* VOLSCIAN SENATORS, PATRICIANS, AEDILES, LIC-
TORS, SOLDIERS, CITIZENS, MESSENGERS, SERVANTS *to Au-*
fidius, and other ATTENDANTS.

SCENE—*Partly Rome and its neighbourhood; partly Corioli*
and its neighbourhood; and partly Antium.



Coriolanus

ACT 1

ACT I

THE ROMAN citizens revolt against the patricians, believing that corn is being hoarded while they go hungry. One patrician, Menenius, a favorite with the people, tells them that they cannot fight the establishment. His warrior friend, Caius Marcius, already unpopular with the plebeians because of his pride, castigates the mob for its cowardice, fickleness and greed. Caius Marcius is angry because in the Capitol the patricians have consented to appoint five plebeian tribunes to represent the people, and when he hears that the Volscians, headed by his respected enemy Aufidius, are in arms, he welcomes war as a solution to the present trouble. He prepares to go off on the campaign under the leadership of Cominius. Two tribunes, Sicinius and Brutus, say that he only does so in order to reap half Cominius' honors and to blame him for any failures. Caius Marcius' mother Volumnia, is delighted at the thought that her son will earn more glory in battle. His wife, Virgilia, however, fears for his safety and vows not to leave her house until he returns from the wars. Shortly afterwards Marcius takes the city of Corioli. Although wounded, he then joins the Romans under Cominius who are being worsted on the battlefield, and rallies them to victory. In a personal encounter with Aufidius he is again victorious. He subsequently refuses the spoils offered him, but he accepts the name Coriolanus in token of his bravery at Corioli.

ACT I. SCENE I.

Rome. A street.

Enter a company of mutinous CITIZENS, with staves; clubs, and other weapons.

FIRST CITIZEN.

Before we proceed any further, hear me speak.

CITIZENS.

Speak, speak.

FIRST CITIZEN.

You are all resolved rather to die than to famish?

CITIZENS.

Resolved, resolved.

FIRST CITIZEN.

First, you know Caius Marcius is chief enemy to the people.

CITIZENS.

We know't, we know't.

FIRST CITIZEN.

Let us kill him, and we'll have corn¹ at our own price. Is't a verdict?

¹ corn: wheat.

CITIZENS.

No more talking on't;¹ let it be done: away, away!

SECOND CITIZEN.

One word, good citizens.

FIRST CITIZEN.

We are accounted poor citizens; the patricians, good. What authority² surfeits on³ would relieve us: if they would yield us but the superfluity,⁴ while it were wholesome, we might guess they relieved us humanely; but they think we are too dear:⁵ the leanness that afflicts us, the object of our misery, is as an inventory to particularize their abundance; our sufferance⁶ is a gain to them.—Let us revenge this with our pikes,⁷ ere we become rakes:⁸ for the gods know I speak this in hunger for bread, not in thirst for revenge.

SECOND CITIZEN.

Would you proceed especially against Caius Marcius?

CITIZENS.

Against him first: he's a very dog⁹ to the commonalty.¹⁰

SECOND CITIZEN.

Consider you what services he has done for his country?

FIRST CITIZEN.

Very well; and could be content to give him good report for't, but that he pays himself with being proud.

SECOND CITIZEN.

Nay, but speak not maliciously.

FIRST CITIZEN.

I say unto you, what he hath done famously,¹¹ he did it to

¹ on't: of it. ² authority: those in power. ³ surfeits on: eats to excess. ⁴ superfluity: overflow—that is, the food they cannot eat.

⁵ too dear: too costly; such a plan would be at too great a cost just to earn our good will. ⁶ sufferance: suffering. ⁷ pikes: pitchforks.

⁸ rakes: "as lean as a rake." ⁹ dog: bloodhound; persecutor.

¹⁰ commonalty: the common people. ¹¹ famously: for fame.

that end: though soft-conscienced men can be content to say it was for his country, he did it to please his mother, and to be partly proud;¹ which he is, even to the altitude² of his virtue.³

SECOND CITIZEN.

What he cannot help in his nature, you account a vice in him. You must in no way say he is covetous.

FIRST CITIZEN.

If I must not, I need not be barren of accusations; he hath faults, with surplus, to tire in repetition.⁴ [*Shouts within.*] What shouts are these? The other side o' the city is risen: why stay we prating here? to the Capitoll

CITIZENS.

Come, come.

FIRST CITIZEN.

Soft! who comes here?

SECOND CITIZEN.

Worthy Menenius Agrippa; one that hath always loved the people.

FIRST CITIZEN.

He's one honest enough: would all the rest were so!

Enter MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

What work's my countrymen, in hand? where go you
With bats⁵ and clubs? the matter? speak, I pray you.

FIRST CITIZEN.

Our business is not unknown to the senate; they have had inkling, this fortnight, what we intend to do, which now we'll show 'em in deeds. They say poor suitors have strong

¹ to be partly proud: partly to be proud.

² altitude: height.

³ virtue: courage. ⁴ to tire in repetition: to bore a person in repeating them. ⁵ bats: cudgels.

breaths:¹ they shall know we have strong arms too.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

Why, masters, my good friends, mine honest² neighbours,
Will you undo yourselves?

FIRST CITIZEN.

We cannot, sir, we are undone already.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

I tell you, friends, most charitable care
Have the patricians of you. For your wants,
Your suffering in this dearth,³ you may as well
Strike at the heaven with your staves as lift them
Against the Roman state; whose course will on
The way it takes, cracking ten thousand curbs⁴
Of more strong link asunder than can ever
Appear in your impediment: for the dearth,
The gods, not the patricians, make it; and
Your knees⁵ to them, not arms, must help. Alack,
You are transported by calamity
Thither where more⁶ attends you; and you slander
The helms⁷ o'th'state, who care for you like fathers,
When you curse them as enemies.

FIRST CITIZEN.

Care for us! True, indeed! They ne'er cared for us yet:—
suffer us to famish, and their storehouses cramm'd with grain;
make edicts for usury, to support usurers; repeal daily any
wholesome act establisht against the rich; and provide more
piercing⁸ statutes daily, to chain up and restrain the poor.
If the wars eat us not up, they will; and there's all the love
they bear us.

¹ strong breaths: loud voices. ² honest: honorable. ³ dearth: time of lack of food. ⁴ curbs: restraining chains. ⁵ knees: supplications. ⁶ more: more calamity. ⁷ helms: helmsmen; pilots. ⁸ piercing: cruel.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

Either you must
Confess yourselves wondrous malicious,
Or be accused of folly. I shall tell you
A pretty tale: it may be you have heard it;
But, since it serves my purpose, I will venture
To stale't a little more.¹

FIRST CITIZEN.

Well, I'll hear it, sir: yet you must not think to fob-off² our
disgrace with a tale: but, an't³ please you, deliver.⁴

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

There was a time when all the body's members
Rebell'd against the belly; thus accused it:—
That only like a gulf⁵ it did remain
I'the midst o' the body, idle and unactive,
Still cupboarding the viand, never bearing
Like labour with the rest; where th'other instruments⁶
Did see and hear, devise, instruct, walk, feel,
And, mutually participate, did minister
Unto the appetite and affection⁷ common
Of the whole body. The belly answer'd,—

FIRST CITIZEN.

Well, sir, what answer made the belly?

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

Sir, I shall tell you.—With a kind of smile,
Which ne'er came from the lungs, but even thus—
For, look you, I may make the belly smile
As well as speak—it tauntingly replied
To the discontented members, the mutinous parts
That envied his receipt; even so most fitly
As you malign our senators for that⁸
They are not such as you.

¹ stale't a little more: make it even staler by repetition. ² fob-off: make little of; put aside. ³ an't: if it. ⁴ deliver: tell your tale.
⁵ a gulf: an abyss. ⁶ instruments: organs. ⁷ affection: desire.
⁸ for that: because.

FIRST CITIZEN.

Your belly's answer? What!
 The kingly-crowned head, the vigilant eye,
 The counsellor heart, the arm our soldier,
 Our steed the leg, the tongue our trumpeter,
 With other muniments¹ and petty helps
 In this our fabric, if that they—

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

What then?—

'Fore me, this fellow speaks!—what then? what then?

FIRST CITIZEN.

Should by the cormorant² belly be restrain'd,
 Who is the sink³ o'the body,—

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

Well, what then?

FIRST CITIZEN.

The former agents, if they did complain,
 What could the belly answer?

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

I will tell you;

If you'll bestow a small—of what you have little—
 Patience awhile, you'st⁴ hear the belly's answer.

FIRST CITIZEN.

Y'are long about it.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

Note me this, good friend;
 Your most grave belly was deliberate,
 Not rash like his accusers, and thus answer'd:
 'True is it, my incorporate⁵ friends,' quoth he,
 'That I receive the general food at first,
 Which you do live upon; and fit it is,
 Because I am the store-house and the shop

¹ muniments: defenses.

² cormorant: greedy; a reference to the appetite of the cormorant, a sea bird.

³ sink: cesspool.

⁴ you'st: you shall.

⁵ incorporate: united in one body.

Of the whole body. but, if you do remember,
I send it through the rivers of your blood,
Even to the court, the heart,—to the seat o'the brain;
And, through the cranks¹ and offices² of man,
The strongest nerves³ and small inferior veins
From me receive that natural competency
Whereby they live: and though that all at once,
You, my good friends,'—this says the belly, mark me,—

FIRST CITIZEN.

Ay, sir; well, well.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

'Though all at once can not
See what I do deliver out to each,
Yet I can make my audit⁴ up, that all
From me do back receive the' flour⁵ of all,
And leave me but the bran.'—What say you to't?

FIRST CITIZEN.

It was an answer: how apply you this?

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

The senators of Rome are this good belly,
And you the mutinous members: for examine
Their counsels and their cares; digest things rightly
Touching the weal⁶ o'the common;⁷ you shall find,
No public benefit which you receive
But it proceeds or comes from them to you,
And no way from yourselves.—What do you think,—
You, the great toe of this assembly?

FIRST CITIZEN.

I the great toe? why the great toe?

¹ cranks: winding passages. ² offices: places where the work is done—kitchen, pantry, etc.; organs of the body. ³ nerves: sinews.
⁴ audit: account. ⁵ flour: i.e., best part. ⁶ weal: welfare. ⁷ common: common man.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

For that, being one o'the lowest, basest, poorest,
Of this most wise rebellion, thou go'st foremost:
Thou rascal,¹ that art worst in blood ² to run,
Lead'st first to win some vantage.—³
But make you ready your stiff bats and clubs:
Rome and her rats are at the point of battle;
The one side must have bale.⁴

Enter CAIUS MARCIUS.

Hail, noble Marcius!

CAIUS MARCIUS.

Thanks.—What's the matter, you dissentious rogues,
That, rubbing the poor itch of your opinion,
Make yourselves scabs?

FIRST CITIZEN.

We have ever your good word.

CAIUS MARCIUS.

He that will give good words to thee will flatter
Beneath abhorring.⁵ What would you have, you curs,
That like nor peace nor⁶ war? the one affrights you,
The other makes you proud. He that trusts to you,
Where he should find you lions, finds you hares;
Where foxes, geese: you are no surer, no,
Than is the coal of fire upon the ice,
Or hailstone in the sun. Your virtue⁷ is,
To make him worthy whose offence subdues him,
And curse that justice⁸ did it. Who deserves greatness
Deserves your hate; and your affections⁹ are
A sick man's appetite, who desires most that
Which would increase his evil. He that depends

¹ rascal: lean, inferior kind of deer. ² art worst in blood: least fit.
³ vantage: advantage. ⁴ bale: disaster; injury. ⁵ He . . . abhor-
ring: i.e., "disgusting" would not be a strong enough word for
anyone that would flatter this crowd. ⁶ nor . . . nor: neither . . .
nor. ⁷ Your virtue: your idea of manhood. ⁸ that justice: the
justice that. ⁹ affections: tastes; good opinions.

Upon your favours swims with fins of lead,
And hews down oaks with rushes.¹ Hang ye!

Trust ye!

With every minute you do change a mind;
And call him noble that was now² your hate,
Him vile that was your garland.³ What's the matter,
That in these several places of the city
You cry against the noble senate, who,
Under the gods, keep you in awe, which else
Would feed on one another?—What's their seeking?

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

For corn at their own rates; whereof, they say,
The city is well stored.

CAIUS MARCIUS.

Hang 'em! They say!
They'll sit by the fire, and presume to know
What's done i'the Capitol; who's like⁴ to rise,
Who thrives, and who declines; side factions,⁵ and give out
Conjectural marriages;⁶ making parties strong,
And feebling⁷ such as stand not in their liking
Below their cobbled shoes. They say there's grain enough!
Would the nobility lay aside their ruth,⁸
And let me use my sword, I'd make a quarry⁹
With thousands of these quarter'd¹⁰ slaves, as high
As I could pick¹¹ my lance.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

Nay, these are almost thoroughly persuaded;
For though abundantly they lack discretion,
Yet are they passing¹² cowardly. But, I beseech you,
What says the other troop?

¹ rushes: reeds. ² now: a moment ago. ³ your garland: the man to whom you gave your praise. ⁴ like: likely. ⁵ side factions: side with different parties. ⁶ Conjectural marriages: conjectured alliances. ⁷ feebling: enfeebling. ⁸ ruth: pity; compassion. ⁹ quarry: pile of dead game; hence, a pile of dead bodies. ¹⁰ quarter'd: cut in quarters. ¹¹ pick: pitch. ¹² passing: surpassingly.

CAIUS MARCIUS.

They are dissolved: hang 'em!
They said they were an-hungry:¹ sigh'd forth proverbs,
That hunger broke stone walls, that dogs must eat,
That meat was made for mouths, that the gods sent not
Corn for the rich men only:—with these shreds²
They vented³ their complainings; which being answer'd⁴
And a petition granted them, a strange one—
To break the heart of generosity,⁵
And make bold power look pale—they threw their caps
As they would hang them on the horns o'the moon,
Shouting their emulation.⁶

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

What is granted them?

CAIUS MARCIUS.

Five tribunes to defend their vulgar wisdoms,
Of their own choice: one's Junius Brutus,
Sicinius Velutus, and I know not—'Sdeath!⁷
The rabble should have first unroofed the city,
Ere so prevail'd with me: it will in time
Win upon power,⁸ and throw forth greater themes
For insurrection's arguing.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

This is strange.

CAIUS MARCIUS.

Go, get you home, you fragments!

Enter a MESSENGER, hastily.

¹ an-hungry: hungry. ² shreds: weak arguments. ³ vented: gave utterance to. ⁴ answer'd: satisfied. ⁵ generosity: the gentry. ⁶ emulation: envious rivalry. ⁷ 'Sdeath: an oath—by God's death. ⁸ Win upon power: overcome authority.

MESSENGER.

Where's Caius Marcius?

CAIUS MARCIUS.

Here: what's the matter?

MESSENGER.

The news is, sir, the Volsces are in arms.

CAIUS MARCIUS.

I am glad on't;¹ then we shall ha' means to vent
Our musty superfluity.²—See, our best elders.

*Enter COMINIUS, TITUS LARTIUS, with other SENATORS; JUNIUS
BRUTUS, and SICINIUS VELUTUS.*

FIRST SENATOR.

Marcus, 'tis true that you have lately told us,—
The Volsces are in arms.

CAIUS MARCIUS.

They have a leader,
Tullus Aufidius, that will put you to't.³
I sin in envying his nobility;
And were I any thing but what I am,
I would wish me only he.

COMINIUS.

You have fought together.

CAIUS MARCIUS.

Were half to half the world by the ears,⁴ and he
Upon my party, I'd revolt, to make
Only my wars with him: he is a lion
That I am proud to hunt.

FIRST SENATOR.

Then, worthy Marcius,
Attend upon Cominius to these wars.

COMINIUS.

It is your former promise.

¹ on't: of it.

² vent . . . superfluity: get rid of these unnecessary rogues.

³ put you to't: test your mettle.

⁴ by the ears: quarreling; at war.

CAIUS MARCIUS.

Sir, it is;

And I am constant.—Titus Lartius, thou
Shalt see me once more strike at Tullus' face.

What, art thou stiff? ¹ stand'st out? ²

TITUS LARTIUS.

No, Caius Marcius;

I'll lean upon one crutch, and fight with t'other,
Ere stay behind this business.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

O, true-bred!

FIRST SENATOR.

Your company to the Capitol; where, I know,
Our greatest friends attend ³ us.

TITUS LARTIUS [*to COMINIUS*].

Lead you on.—

[*to MARCIUS*] Follow Cominius: we must follow you;
Right worthy you priority.⁴

COMINIUS.

Noble Marcius!

FIRST SENATOR [*to the CITIZENS*].

Hence to your homes; be gone!

CAIUS MARCIUS.

Nay, let them follow:

The Volsces have much corn; take these rats thither

To gnaw their garners.⁵—Worshipful mutiners,⁶

Your valour puts well forth:⁷ pray, follow.

[*CITIZENS steal away. Exeunt all but BRUTUS and SICINIUS.*

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

Was ever man so proud as is this Marcius?

¹ stiff: obstinate. ² stand'st out: are you still holding back. ³ attend: await. ⁴ Right worthy you priority: it is only right that you should go first. ⁵ garners: granaries. ⁶ mutiners: mutineers. ⁷ puts well forth: makes a brave show.

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

He has no equal.

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

When we were chosen tribunes for the people,—

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

Markt you¹ his lip and eyes?

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

Nay, but his taunts.

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

Being moved, he will not spare² to gird³ the gods.

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

Be-mock the modest moon.

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

The present wars devour him! He is grown

Too proud to be⁴ so valiant.

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

Such a nature,

Tickled with good success, disdains the shadow

Which he treads on at noon: but I do wonder

His insolence can brook⁵ to be commanded

Under Cominius.

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

Fame, at the which he aims,—

In whom already he's well graced,—can not

Better be held, nor more attain'd, than by

A place below the first: for what miscarries

Shall be the general's fault, though he perform

To the utmost of a man; and giddy censure⁶

Will then cry out of Marcius, 'O, if he

Had borne⁷ the business!'

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

Besides, if things go well,

Opinion, that so sticks⁸ on Marcius, shall

Of his demerits⁹ rob Cominius.

¹ Markt you: did you notice. ² spare: hesitate. ³ gird: taunt.

⁴ to be: of being. ⁵ brook: endure. ⁶ giddy censure: fickle opinion.

⁷ borne: been entrusted with. ⁸ sticks: dotes. ⁹ demerits: deserts.

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

Come:

Half all Cominius' honours are to Marcius,
Though Marcius earn'd them not; and all his faults
To Marcius shall be honours, though, indeed,
It aught he merit not.

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

Let's hence, and hear
How the dispatch is made;¹ and in what fashion,
More than his singularity,² he goes
Upon his present action.

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

Let's along.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.

Corioli. The Senate-house.

Enter TULLUS AUFIDIUS with SENATORS of Corioli.

FIRST SENATOR.

So, your opinion is, Aufidius,
That they of Rome are enter'd in our counsels,
And know how we proceed.

TULLUS AUFIDIUS.

Is it not yours?

What ever have been thought on in this state,
That could be brought to bodily act ere Rome
Had circumvention?³ 'Tis not four days gone
Since I heard thence: these are the words: I think
I have the letter here; yes, here it is:
They have prest a power,⁴ but it is not known
Whether for east or west: the dearth is great;

[*Reads.*]

¹ *How . . . made:* how the business has been settled. ² *More . . . singularity:* apart from his own peculiar behavior—that is, his usual imperious manner. ³ *What ever . . . circumvention:* i.e., what has ever been planned by us that has not been nipped in the bud by Rome before it could be carried out. ⁴ *prest a power:* conscripted an army.

The people mutinous: and it is rumour'd,
Cominius, Marcius your old enemy,—
Who is of¹ Rome worse hated than of you,—
And Titus Lartius, a most valiant Roman,
These three lead on this preparation
Whither 'tis bent:² most likely 'tis for you:
Consider of it.

FIRST SENATOR.

Our army's in the field:
We never yet made doubt but Rome was ready
To answer us.

TULLUS AUFIDIUS.

Nor did you think it folly
To keep your great pretences veil'd till when
They needs must show themselves; which in the hatching,³
It seem'd, appeared to Rome. By the discovery
We shall be shorten'd in our aim;⁴ which was,
To take in many towns, ere, almost, Rome
Should know we were afoot.

SECOND SENATOR.

Noble Aufidius,
Take your commission;⁵ hie you⁶ to your bands:
Let us alone to guard Corioli:
If they set down before's,⁷ for the remove⁸
Bring up your army; but, I think, you'll find
Th'have not prepared for us.

TULLUS AUFIDIUS.

O, doubt not that;
I speak from certainties. Nay, more,
Some parcels⁹ of their power are forth already,
And only hitherward. I leave your honours.

¹ of: by. ² bent: intended. ³ hatching: plotting. ⁴ be shorten'd in our aim: fall short of our goal. ⁵ commission: appointment as commander. ⁶ hie you: hurry. ⁷ before's: before us. ⁸ remove: defeat of the enemy. ⁹ parcels: portions; detachments.

If we and Caius Marcius chance to meet,
 'Tis sworn between us, we shall ever strike
 Till one can do no more.

ALL.

The gods assist you!

TULLUS AUFIDIUS.

And keep your honours safe!

FIRST SENATOR.

Farewell.

SECOND SENATOR.

Farewell.

ALL.

Farewell.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.

Rome. A room in MARCIUS' house.

*Enter VOLUMNIA and VIRGILIA, mother and wife to MARCIUS:
 they set them down on two low stools, and sew.*

VOLUMNIA.

I pray you, daughter, sing; or express yourself in a more comfortable sort:¹ if my son were my husband, I should freelier rejoice in that absence wherein he won honour than in the embracements of his bed where he would show most love. When yet he was but tender-bodied,² and the only son of my womb; when youth with comeliness pluckt all gaze his way;³ when, for a day of kings' entreaties,⁴ a mother should not sell him an hour from her beholding; I—considering how honour would become such a person;⁵ that it was no better than picture-like to hang by⁶ the wall, if renown made it

¹ sort: way; fashion. ² tender-bodied: i.e., a young boy. ³ pluckt all gaze his way: caused everyone to stare at him. ⁴ for a day of kings' entreaties: though kings should beg all day. ⁵ such a person: that is, one of so noble an appearance. ⁶ by: on.

not stir—was pleased to let him seek danger where he was like to find fame. To a cruel war I sent him: from whence he return'd, his brows bound with oak.¹ I tell thee, daughter, I sprang not more in joy at first hearing he was a man-child than now in first seeing he had proved himself a man.

VIRGILIA.

But had he died in the business, madam,—how then?

VOLUMNIA.

Then his good report² should have been my son; I therein would have found issue.³ Hear me profess sincerely, had I a dozen sons, each in my love alike, and none less dear than thine and my good Marcius, I had rather had eleven die nobly for their country than one voluptuously surfeit⁴ out of action.⁵

Enter a GENTLEWOMAN.

GENTLEWOMAN.

Madam, the Lady Valeria is come to visit you.

VIRGILIA.

Beseech you, give me leave to retire myself.

VOLUMNIA.

Indeed, you shall not.

Methinks I hear hither your husband's drum;

See him pluck Aufidius down by the hair;

As children from a bear, the Volsces shunning him:⁶

Methinks I see him stamp thus, and call thus,—

'Come on, you cowards! you were got⁷ in fear,

Though you were born in Rome:' his bloody brow

¹ bound with oak: bound with the garland of victory (usually a wreath of leaves). ² good report: fame. ³ issue: my children.

⁴ voluptuously surfeit: sated with luxurious living. ⁵ out of action: in inactivity. ⁶ shunning him: fleeing from him. ⁷ got: begotten.

With his mail'd ¹ hand then wiping, forth he goes,
 Like to a harvest-man, that's taskt to mow²
 Or all, or³ lose his hire.⁴

VIRGILIA.

His bloody brow! O Jupiter, no blood!

VOLUMNIA.

Away, you fool! it more becomes a man
 Than gilt his trophy:⁵ the breasts of Hecuba,⁶
 When she did suckle Hector, lookt not lovelier
 Than Hector's forehead when it spit forth blood
 At Grecian sword, contemning.⁷—Tell Valeria
 We are fit⁸ to bid her welcome. [Exit GENTLEWOMAN.]

VIRGILIA.

Heavens bless my lord from fell ⁹ Aufidius!

VOLUMNIA.

He'll beat Aufidius' head below his knee,
 And tread upon his neck.

Enter VALERIA with USHER and a GENTLEWOMAN.

VALERIA.

My ladies both, good day to you.

VOLUMNIA.

Sweet madam.

VIRGILIA.

I am glad to see your ladyship.

VALERIA.

How do you both? you are manifest housekeepers. What are you sewing here? A fine spot,¹⁰ in good faith.—How does your little son?

VIRGILIA.

I thank your ladyship; well, good madam.

¹ mail'd: armored. ² taskt to mow: assigned the task of mowing.
³ Or . . . or: either . . . or. ⁴ lose his hire: lose his job. ⁵ it
 . . . trophy: blood is more becoming to a man than the gilding on
 his monument. ⁶ Hecuba: the wife of King Priam of Troy, and
 mother of Hector, bravest of the Trojan warriors. ⁷ contem-
 ning: disdain. ⁸ fit: ready. ⁹ fell: cruel. ¹⁰ spot: pattern of
 embroidery.

VOLUMNIA.

He had rather see the swords, and hear a drum, than look upon his schoolmaster.

VALERIA.

O'my word, the father's son: I'll swear, 'tis a very pretty boy. O'my troth,¹ I lookt upon him o' Wednesday half an hour together: has such a confirm'd² countenance. I saw him run after a gilded butterfly; and when he caught it, he let it go again; and after it again; and over and over he comes, and up again; catcht it again: or whether his fall enraged him, or how 'twas, he did so set his teeth, and tear it: O, I warrant, how he mammockt it!³

VOLUMNIA.

One on's⁴ father's moods.

VALERIA.

Indeed, la, 'tis a noble child.

VIRGILIA.

A crack,⁵ madam.

VALERIA.

Come, lay aside your stitchery: I must have you play the idle huswife⁶ with me this afternoon.

VIRGILIA.

No, good madam; I will not out of doors.

VALERIA.

Not out of doors!

VOLUMNIA.

She shall, she shall.

VIRGILIA.

Indeed, no, by your patience; I'll not over the threshold till my lord return from the wars.

VALERIA.

Fie, you confine yourself most unreasonably: come, you must go visit the good lady that lies in.⁷

¹ O'my troth: on my word; indeed. ² confirm'd: determined.

³ mammockt it: tore it to pieces. ⁴ on's: of his. ⁵ crack: little imp.

⁶ play . . . huswife: idle away your time; huswife: housewife.

⁷ lies in: awaits the birth of a baby.

VIRGILIA.

I will wish her speedy strength, and visit her with my prayers;
but I cannot go thither.

VOLUMNIA.

Why, I pray you?

VIRGILIA.

'Tis not to save labour, nor that I want¹ love.

VALERIA.

You would be another Penelope:² yet, they say, all the yarn
she spun in Ulysses' absence did but fill Ithaca full of moths.
Come; I would your cambric³ were sensible⁴ as your finger,
that you might leave pricking it for pity. Come, you shall go
with us.

VIRGILIA.

No, good madam, pardon me; indeed, I will not forth.

VALERIA.

In truth, la, go with me; and I'll tell you excellent news of
your husband.

VIRGILIA.

O, good madam, there can be none yet.

VALERIA.

Verily, I do not jest with you; there came news from him last
night.

VIRGILIA.

Indeed, madam?

VALERIA.

In earnest, it's true; I heard a senator speak it. Thus it is:—
The Volsces have an army forth; against whom Cominius the
general is gone, with one part of our Roman power: your lord
and Titus Lartius are set down before their city Corioli; they
nothing doubt prevailing,⁵ and to make it brief wars. This

¹ want: am lacking in. ² Penelope: Ulysses' wife, who waited ten years for her husband to return to Ithaca after the siege of Troy.
³ cambric: fine, thin linen. ⁴ sensible: as sensitive to pain. ⁵ they . . . prevailing: they have no doubt of their success in overcoming the enemy.

is true, on mine honour; and so, I pray, go with us.

VIRGILIA.

Give me excuse, good madam; I will obey you in every thing hereafter.

VOLUMNIA.

Let her alone, lady: as she is now, she will but disease¹ our better mirth.

VALERIA.

In troth, I think she would.—Fare you well, then.—Come, good sweet lady.—Prithee, Virgilia, turn thy solemnness out o'door, and go along with us.

VIRGILIA.

No, at a word,² madam; indeed, I must not. I wish you much mirth.

VALERIA.

Well, then, farewell.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE IV.

Before Corioli.

Enter MARCIUS, TITUS LARTIUS, with drum and colours, with CAPTAINS and SOLDIERS, as before the city Corioli: to them a MESSENGER.

CAIUS MARCIUS.

Yonder comes news:—a wager³ they have met.

TITUS LARTIUS.

My horse to yours, no.

CAIUS MARCIUS.

'Tis done.

TITUS LARTIUS.

Agreed.

¹ disease: disturb; deprive of ease.

² at a word: on my word.

³ wager: bet.

CAIUS MARCIUS.

Say, has our general met the enemy?

MESSENGER.

They lie in view; but have not spoke as yet.

TITUS LARTIUS.

So, the good horse is mine.

CAIUS MARCIUS.

I'll buy him of you.

TITUS LARTIUS.

No, I'll nor¹ sell nor give him; lend you him I will

For half a hundred years.—Summon the town.

CAIUS MARCIUS.

How far off lie these armies?

MESSENGER.

Within this mile and half.

CAIUS MARCIUS.

Then shall we hear their 'larum,² and they ours.—

Now, Mars, I prithee, make us quick in work,

That we with smoking swords may march from hence,

To help our fielded³ friends!—Come, blow thy blast.

They sound a parley.⁴ Enter two SENATORS with others on the walls of Corioli.

Tullus Aufidius, is he within your walls?

FIRST SENATOR.

No, nor a man that fears you less than he,

That's lesser than a little. [*Drum afar off.*] Hark, our drums

Are bringing forth our youth! we'll break our walls,

Rather than they shall pound us up:⁵ our gates,

Which yet seem shut, we have but pinn'd with rushes;

¹ nor: neither.

² 'larum: alarum; call to arms.

³ fielded: engaged on the battlefield.

⁴ sound a parley: a trumpet call to summon a conference.

⁵ pound us up: shut us up in a pound; pen us up.

They'll open of themselves. [*Alarum afar off*]

Hark you, far off!

There is Aufidius; list,¹ what work he makes
Amongst your cloven² army.

CAIUS MARCIUS.

O, they're at it!

TITUS LARTIUS.

Their noise be our instruction.—Ladders, hol

Enter the ARMY of the VOLSCES.

CAIUS MARCIUS.

They fear us not, but issue forth their city.
Now put your shields before your hearts, and fight
With hearts more proof³ than shields.—Advance, brave Titus:
They do disdain us much beyond our thoughts,
Which makes me sweat with wrath.—Come on, my fellows:
He that retires, I'll take him for a Volsce,
And he shall feel mine edge.⁴

Alarum. The ROMANS are beat back to their trenches.

Enter MARCIUS, cursing.

CAIUS MARCIUS.

All the contagion of the south⁵ light on you,
You shames of Rome! you herd of—Boils and plagues
Plaster you o'er; that you may be abhorr'd
Further than seen, and one infect another
Against the wind a mile! ⁶ You souls of geese,
That bear the shapes of men, how have you run
From slaves that apes would beat! Pluto⁷ and hell!

¹ list: listen to. ² cloven: split; cut up. ³ proof: tough (tested, as the finest metal). ⁴ edge: sword. ⁵ south: south wind (supposed to bring disease). ⁶ Against . . . mile: that is, the contagion will carry a mile even against the wind. ⁷ Pluto: ruler of the underworld.

All hurt behind; backs red, and faces pale
 With flight and agued ¹ fear! Mend, ² and charge home, ³
 Or, by the fires of heaven, ⁴ I'll leave the foe,
 And make my wars on you: look to't: come on;
 If you'll stand fast, we'll beat them to their wives,
 As they us to our trenches. Follow's

Another alarum, and MARCIUS follows the VOLSCES to the gates, and is shut in.

So, now the gates are ope:—now prove good seconds: ⁵
 'Tis for the followers fortune widens them,
 Not for the fliers: mark ⁶ me, and do the like. [*Enters the gates.*

FIRST SOLDIER.

Fool-hardiness; not I.

SECOND SOLDIER.

Nor I.

FIRST SOLDIER.

See, they have shut him in.

ALL.

To the pot, ⁷ I warrant him.

[*Alarum continues.*

Enter TITUS LARTIUS.

TITUS LARTIUS.

What is become of Marcius?

ALL.

Slain, sir, doubtless.

FIRST SOLDIER.

Following the fliers at the very heels,
 With them he enters; who, upon the sudden, ⁸
 Clapt-to ⁹ their gates: he is himself alone, ¹⁰
 To answer ¹¹ all the city.

¹ agued: trembling. ² Mend: re-form your ranks. ³ home: to the hilt. ⁴ fires of heaven: stars. ⁵ seconds: followers; assistants. ⁶ mark: watch. ⁷ To the pot: to the cooking-pot—that is, to his death. ⁸ upon the sudden: suddenly. ⁹ Clapt-to: closed. ¹⁰ himself alone: all by himself. ¹¹ answer: oppose.

TITUS LARTIUS.

O noble fellow!

Who, sensible,¹ outdares his senseless sword,
And, when it bows, stands up! Thou art left,² Marcius:
A carbuncle³ entire, as big as thou art,
Were not so rich a jewel. Thou wast a soldier
Even to Cato's⁴ wish, not fierce and terrible
Only in strokes, but, with thy grim looks and
The thunder-like percussion of thy sounds,
Thou madest thine enemies shake, as if the world
Were feverous and did tremble.

Enter MARCIUS, bleeding, assaulted by the enemy.

FIRST SOLDIER.

Look, sir.

TITUS LARTIUS.

O, 'tis Marcius!

Let's fetch him off,⁵ or make remain alike.⁶

[They fight, and all enter the city.]

SCENE V.

Within Corioli. A street.

Enter certain ROMANS, with spoils.

FIRST ROMAN.

This will I carry to Rome.

SECOND ROMAN.

And I this.

THIRD ROMAN.

A murrain on't! ⁷ I took this for silver.

[Alarum continues still afar off.]

¹ sensible: himself sensitive to pain. ² left: forsaken. ³ carbuncle: precious red stone. ⁴ Cato's: Cato, the Roman censor, was known as a strict disciplinarian. ⁵ fetch him off: rescue him. ⁶ make remain alike: remain with him to share his fate. ⁷ A murrain on't: a plague on it (an Elizabethan oath).

Enter MARCIUS and TITUS LARTIUS with a trumpet.

CAIUS MARCIUS.

See here these movers¹ that do prize their hours
At a crackt² drachma! ³ Cushions, leaden spoons,
Irons of a doit,⁴ doublets that hangmen would
Bury with those that wore them,⁵ these base slaves,
Ere yet the fight be done, pack up:—down with them!—
And hark, what noise the general makes!—To him!
There is the man of my soul's hate, Aufidius,
Piercing our Romans: then, valiant Titus, take
Convenient numbers to make good the city;
Whilst I, with those that have the spirit, will haste
To help Cominius.

TITUS LARTIUS.

Worthy sir, thou bleed'st;
Thy exercise hath been too violent
For a second course⁶ of fight.

CAIUS MARCIUS.

Sir, praise me not;
My work hath yet not warm'd me: fare you well:
The blood I drop is rather physical⁷
Than dangerous to me: to Aufidius thus
I will appear, and fight.

TITUS LARTIUS.

Now the fair goddess, Fortune,
Fall deep in love with thee; and her great charms
Misguide thy opposers' swords! Bold gentleman,
Prosperity be thy page!⁸

CAIUS MARCIUS.

Thy friend⁹ no less
Than those she placeth highest! So, farewell.

¹ movers: cowards. ² crackt: worthless. ³ drachma: a small silver coin (Greek). ⁴ Irons of a doit: swords worth about a half-farthing (a *doit* is a Dutch copper coin). ⁵ doublets . . . them: jackets not worth saving by the hangman. ⁶ course: round. ⁷ physical: beneficial; medicinal. ⁸ page: attendant. ⁹ Thy friend: may fortune befriend you.

TITUS LARTIUS.

Thou worthiest Marcius!—

[*Exit* MARCIUS.]

Go, sound thy trumpet in the market-place;

Call thither all the officers o'the town,

Where they shall know our mind: away!

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE VI.

Near the camp of COMINIUS.

Enter COMINIUS, *as it were in retire, with* SOLDIERS.

COMINIUS.

Breathe you,¹ my friends: well fought; we are come off

Like Romans, neither foolish in our stands

Nor cowardly in retire:² believe me, sirs,

We shall be charged again. Whiles we have struck,

By interims and conveying gusts³ we have heard

The charges of our friends.—Ye Roman gods,

Lead their successes as we wish our own,

That both our powers, with smiling fronts⁴ encountering,

May give you thankful sacrifice!

Enter a MESSENGER.

Thy news?

MESSENGER.

The citizens of Corioli have issued,

And given to Lartius and to Marcius battle:

I saw our party to their trenches driven,

And then I came away.

COMINIUS.

Though thou speak'st truth,

Methinks thou speak'st not well.⁵ How long is't since?

¹ Breathe you: take a rest.

² retire: retreat.

³ By interims . . . gusts: at intervals, aided by gusts of wind.

⁴ fronts: faces.

⁵ not well: not quite accurately.

MESSENGER.

Above an hour, my lord.

COMINIUS.

'Tis not a mile; briefly¹ we heard their drums:
How couldst thou in a mile confound² an hour,
And bring thy news so late?

MESSENGER.

Spies of the Volsces
Held me in chase, that³ I was forced to wheel⁴
Three or four miles about; else had I, sir,
Half an hour since brought my report.

COMINIUS.

Who's yonder,
That does appear as he were⁵ flay'd? O gods!
He has the stamp⁶ of Marcius; and I have
Before-time seen him thus.

CAIUS MARCIUS [*within*].

Come I too late?

COMINIUS.

The shepherd knows not thunder from a tabor,⁷
More than I know the sound of Marcius' tongue
From every meaner man.

Enter MARCIUS.

CAIUS MARCIUS.

Come I too late?

COMINIUS.

Ay, if you come not in the blood of others,
But mantled in your own.

CAIUS MARCIUS.

O, let me clip⁸ ye
In arms as sound as when I woo'd; in heart
As merry as when our nuptial day was done,
And tapers burnt to bedward!

¹ briefly: a short time ago. ² confound: waste. ³ that: so that.
⁴ wheel: make a detour. ⁵ as he were: as if he were. ⁶ stamp:
look. ⁷ tabor: small drum (a musical instrument associated with
peaceful times). ⁸ clip: embrace.

COMINIUS.

Flower of warriors,

How is't with Titus Lartius?

CAIUS MARCIUS.

As with a man busied about decrees:
Condemning some to death, and some to exile;
Ransoming him or pitying, threatening the other;
Holding Corioli in the name of Rome,
Even like a fawning greyhound in the leash,
To let him slip at will.

COMINIUS.

Where is that slave

Which told me they had beat you to your trenches?
Where is he? call him hither.

CAIUS MARCIUS.

Let him alone;

He did inform¹ the truth: but for our gentlemen,²
The common file³—a plague!⁴—tribunes for them!—
The mouse ne'er shunn'd the cat as they did budge⁵
From rascals worse than they.

COMINIUS.

But how prevail'd you? ⁶

CAIUS MARCIUS.

Will the time serve to tell? I do not think.⁷
Where is the enemy? are you lords o'the field?
If not, why cease you till you are so?

COMINIUS.

Marcus,

We have at disadvantage fought, and did
Retire, to win our purpose.

¹ inform: tell you. ² gentlemen: volunteers; the pick of the army.
³ file: roster of soldiers. ⁴ a plague: a plague on them. ⁵ budge:
shrink. ⁶ how . . . you?: how did you escape? ⁷ I do not think:
I do not think so.

CAIUS MARCIUS.

How lies their battle? ¹ know you on which side
They have placed their men of trust?

COMINIUS.

As I guess, Marcius,

Their bands i'the vaward ² are the Antiates,
Of their best trust; o'er them Aufidius,
Their very heart of hope.³

CAIUS MARCIUS.

I do beseech you,
By all the battles wherein we have fought,
By th'blood we have shed together, by the vows
We have made to endure⁴ friends, that you directly
Set me against Aufidius and his Antiates;
And that you not delay the present, but,
Filling the air with swords advanced ⁵ and darts,
We prove⁶ this very hour.

COMINIUS.

Though I could wish
You were conducted to a gentle bath,
And balms applied to you, yet dare I never
Deny your asking: take your choice of those
That best can aid your action.

CAIUS MARCIUS.

Those are they
That most are willing.—If any such be here—
As it were sin to doubt—that love this painting
Wherein you see me smear'd; if any fear
Lesser his person⁷ than an ill report;
If any think brave death outweighs bad life,
And that his country's dearer than himself;
Let him alone, or so many so minded,
Wave thus, to express his disposition,

¹ How lies their battle?: where are their forces stationed? ² vaward: vanguard. ³ very heart of hope: greatest hope. ⁴ endure: remain. ⁵ advanced: raised. ⁶ prove: put our luck to the test. ⁷ his person: personal injury.

And follow Marcius.

[They all shout, and wave their swords; take him up in their arms, and cast up their caps.]

O, me alone! make you a sword of me?

If these shows be not outward, which of you

But is four Volscies? none of you but is

Able to bear against the great Aufidius

A shield as hard as his. A certain number,

Though thanks to all, must I select from all: the rest

Shall bear the business in some other fight,

As cause will be obey'd.¹ Please you to march;

And four shall quickly draw out my command,

Which men are best inclined.

COMINIUS.

March on, my fellows:

Make good this ostentation,² and you shall

Divide in all with us.

[Exeunt.]

SCENE VII.

The gates of Corioli.

TITUS LARTIUS, *having set a guard upon Corioli, going with drum and trumpet toward COMINIUS and CAIUS MARCIUS, enters with a* LIEUTENANT, *other* SOLDIERS, *and a* SCOUT.

TITUS LARTIUS.

So, let the ports³ be guarded: keep your duties,

As I have set them down. If I do send, dispatch

Those centuries⁴ to our aid; the rest will serve

For a short holding: if we lose the field,

We cannot keep the town.

¹ As cause will be obey'd: as the need arises.

² Make good this ostentation: let this display of eagerness show up in your fighting.

³ ports: gates.

⁴ centuries: companies of one hundred men each.

LIEUTENANT.

Fear not our care, sir.

TITUS LARTIUS.

Hence, and shut your gates upon's.—

Our guider, come; to the Roman camp conduct us. [Exeunt.]

SCENE VIII.

A field of battle between the Roman and the Volscian camps.

Alarum as in battle. Enter MARCIUS and AUFIDIUS at several¹ doors.

CAIUS MARCIUS.

I'll fight with none but thee; for I do hate thee
Worse than a promise-breaker.

TULLUS AUFIDIUS.

We hate alike:

Not Afric² owns a serpent I abhor
More than thy fame I envy. Fix thy foot.³

CAIUS MARCIUS.

Let the first budger⁴ die the other's slave,
And the gods doom him after!

TULLUS AUFIDIUS.

If I fly, Marcius,

Halloo me⁵ like a hare.

CAIUS MARCIUS.

Within these three hours, Tullus,

Alone I fought in your Corioli walls,
And made what work I pleased: 'tis not my blood
Wherein thou seest me maskt; for thy revenge

¹ *several*: separate.

² *Afric*: Africa.

³ *Fix thy foot*: take your stand.

⁴ *budger*: flincher.

⁵ *Halloo me*: shout at me and make me run, so that you may pursue me (as in hunting rabbits).

Wrench up¹ thy power to the highest.

TULLUS AUFIDIUS.

Wert thou the Héctor

That was the whip of your bragg'd progeny,²

Thou shouldst not scape me here.

[*Here they fight, and certain VOLSCES come in the aid of*
AUFIDIUS. MARCIUS fights till they be driven in breathless.

Officious, and not valiant,—you have shamed me

In your condemned seconds.³

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE IX.

The Roman camp.

Flourish. Alarum. A retreat is sounded. Enter, at one door,
COMINIUS *with the ROMANS; at another door, MARCIUS, with*
his arm in a scarf.

COMINIUS.

If I should tell thee o'er this thy day's work,

Thou'lt⁴ not believe thy deeds: but I'll report it,

Where senators shall mingle tears with smiles;

Where great patricians shall attend, and shrug,

I'the end admire; where ladies shall be frightened,

And, gladly quaked,⁵ hear more; where the dull tribunes,

That, with the fusty⁶ plebeians, hate thine honours,

Shall say, against their hearts,⁷ 'We thank the gods

Our Rome hath such a soldier!'

Yet camest thou to a morsel of this feast,

Having fully dined before.⁸

¹ Wrench up: lever or jack up. ² bragg'd progeny: boasted ancestors; an allusion to the descent of the Romans from the Trojans, of whom Hector was their greatest hope. ³ In your condemned seconds: with your unwanted assistance. ⁴ Thou'lt: you would. ⁵ quaked: fearful. ⁶ fusty: moldy. ⁷ against their hearts: even though they dislike you. ⁸ Yet . . . before: that is, these deeds are small when compared with your past exploits.

Enter TITUS LARTIUS, *with his power, from the pursuit.*

TITUS LARTIUS.

O general,
Here is the steed, we the caparison:¹
Hadst thou beheld—

CAIUS MARCIUS.

Pray now, no more: my mother,
Who has a charter to extol her blood,²
When she does praise me grieves me. I have done
As you have done,—that's what I can; induced
As you have been,—that's for my country:
He that has but effected his good will³
Hath overta'en mine act.

COMINIUS.

You shall not be
The grave of your deserving;⁴ Rome must know
The value of her own: 'twere a concealment
Worse than a theft, no less than a traducement,⁵
To hide your doings; and to silence that,
Which, to the spire⁶ and top of praises voucht,
Would seem but modest: therefore, I beseech you—
In sign of what you are, not to reward
What you have done—before our army hear me.

CAIUS MARCIUS.

I have some wounds upon me, and they smart
To hear themselves remember'd.

COMINIUS.

Should they not,
Well might they fester 'gainst ingratitude,
And tent⁷ themselves with death. Of all the horses,—

¹ the caparison: the mere trappings of the steed (Marcius). ² a charter . . . blood: the special privilege of blood to praise her son. ³ effected . . . will: done his best. ⁴ You . . . deserving: you shall not bury your just deserts. ⁵ a traducement: an unjust censure. ⁶ spire: church spire. ⁷ tent: cleanse.

Whereof we have to'en good, and good store,¹—of all
The treasure in this field achieved and city,²
We render you the tenth; to be ta'en forth,
Before the common distribution,
At your only³ choice.

CAIUS MARCIUS.

I thank you, general;
But cannot make my heart consent to take
A bribe to pay my sword:⁴ I do refuse it;
And stand upon my common part with those
That have beheld the doing.

[A long flourish. They all cry, 'Marcius! Marcius!' cast up
their caps and lances: COMINIUS and LARTIUS stand bare.⁵

CAIUS MARCIUS.

May these same instruments, which you profane,
Never sound more! When drums and trumpets shall
I'the field prove flatterers, let courts and cities be
Made all of false-faced soothing! ⁶ When steel ⁷ grows
Soft as the parasite's⁸ silk, let him be made
A coverture for the wars! No more, I say!
For that I have not washt my nose that bled,
Or foil'd some debile⁹ wretch,—which, without note,
Here's many else have done,—you shout me forth
In acclamations hyperbolical;¹⁰
As if I loved my little should be dieted ¹¹
In praises sauced with lies.

¹ good store: a goodly number. ² city: in the city. ³ only: sole.
⁴ to pay my sword: to pay me for what I have done in battle.
⁵ bare: bareheaded, as a mark of respect. ⁶ false-faced soothing:
deceitful flatterers. ⁷ steel: armor. ⁸ parasite's: silkworm's.
⁹ debile: weak; feeble. ¹⁰ hyperbolical: exaggerated. ¹¹ dieted:
fed.

COMINIUS.

Too modest are you;
More cruel to your good report than grateful
To us that give¹ you truly: by your patience,
If 'gainst yourself you be incensed, we'll put you—
Like one that means his proper² harm—in manacles,
Then reason safely with you. Therefore, be it known,
As to us, to all the world, that Caius Marcius
Wears this war's garland: in token of the which,
My noble steed, known to the camp, I give him,
With all his trim belonging;³ and from this time,
For what he did before Corioli, call him,
With all the applause and clamour of the host,
CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.—Bear
The addition⁴ nobly ever!

[Flourish. Trumpets sound and drums.]

ALL.

Caius Marcius Coriolanus!

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

I will go wash;
And when my face is fair,⁵ you shall perceive
Whether I blush or no: howbeit, I thank you:—
I mean to stride your steed; and at all times,
To undercrest⁶ your good addition
To the fairness of my power.

COMINIUS.

So, to our tent;
Where, ere we do repose us, we will write
To Rome of our success.—You, Titus Lartius,

¹ give: report.

² proper: own; personal.

³ trim belonging: fancy trappings.

⁴ addition: title of honor.

⁵ fair: clean.

⁶ undercrest: bear as a crest.

Must to Corioli back: send us to Rome
The best,¹ with whom we may articulate,²
For their own good and ours.

TITUS LARTIUS.

I shall, my lord.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

The gods begin to mock me. I, that now³
Refused most princely gifts, am bound to beg
Of my lord general.

COMINIUS.

Take't; 'tis yours. What is't?

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

I sometime⁴ lay,⁵ here in Corioli,
At a poor man's house; he used me kindly:—
He cried to me; I saw him prisoner;
But then Aufidius was within my view,
And wrath o'erwhelm'd my pity: I request you
To give my poor host freedom.

COMINIUS.

O, well begg'd!

Were he the butcher of my son, he should
Be free as is the wind.—Deliver him, Titus.

TITUS LARTIUS.

Marcus, his name?

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

By Jupiter, forgot:—⁶

I am weary; yea, my memory is tired.—
Have we no wine here?

COMINIUS.

Go we to our tent:

The blood upon your visage dries; 'tis time
It should be lookt to: come.

[*Exeunt.*]

¹ best: the most prominent men of Corioli.

² articulate: discuss the terms of peace.

³ now: a short time ago.

⁴ sometime: in the past; once.

⁵ lay: lodged.

⁶ forgot: I have forgotten.

SCENE X.

The camp of the VOLSCES.

A flourish. Cornets. Enter TULLUS AUFIDIUS bloody, with two or three SOLDIERS.

TULLUS AUFIDIUS.

The town is ta'en!

FIRST SOLDIER.

'Twill be deliver'd back on good condition.¹

TULLUS AUFIDIUS.

Condition!—

I would I were a Roman; for I cannot,
Being a Volsce, be that I am.—Condition!
What good condition can a treaty find
I'the part that is at mercy?² Five times, Marcius,
I have fought with thee; so often hast thou beat me;
And wouldst do so, I think, should we encounter
As often as we eat.—By the elements,³
If e'er again I meet him beard to beard,⁴
He's mine, or I am his: mine emulation⁵
Hath not that honour in't it had; for where
I thought to crush him in an equal force,
True sword to sword, I'll potch⁶ at him some way,
Or wrath or⁷ craft may get him.

FIRST SOLDIER.

He's the devil.

TULLUS AUFIDIUS.

Bolder, though not so subtle. My valour's poison'd
With only suffering stain by him; for him
Shall fly out of itself: nor sleep nor sanctuary,
Being naked, sick, nor fane⁸ nor Capitol,

¹ condition: terms.

² I'the part . . . mercy: i.e., on the con-

quered side.

³ elements: earth, sea, fire and air.

⁴ beard to

beard: face to face.

⁵ emulation: envious rivalry.

⁶ potch:

thrust; poke.

⁷ Or . . . or: either . . . or.

⁸ fane: temple.

The prayers of priests nor times of sacrifice,
Embarquements¹ all of fury, shall lift up
Their rotten privilege and custom 'gainst
My hate to Marcius: where I find him, were it
At home, upon my brother's guard,² even there,
Against the hospitable canon,³ would I
Wash my fierce hand in's heart. Go you to the city;
Learn how 'tis held; and what they are that must
Be hostages for Rome.

FIRST SOLDIER.

Will not you go?

TULLUS AUFIDIUS.

I am attended ⁴ at the cypress grove: I pray you—
'Tis south the city mills—bring me word thither
How the world goes, that to the pace of it
I may spur on my journey.

FIRST SOLDIER.

I shall, sir.

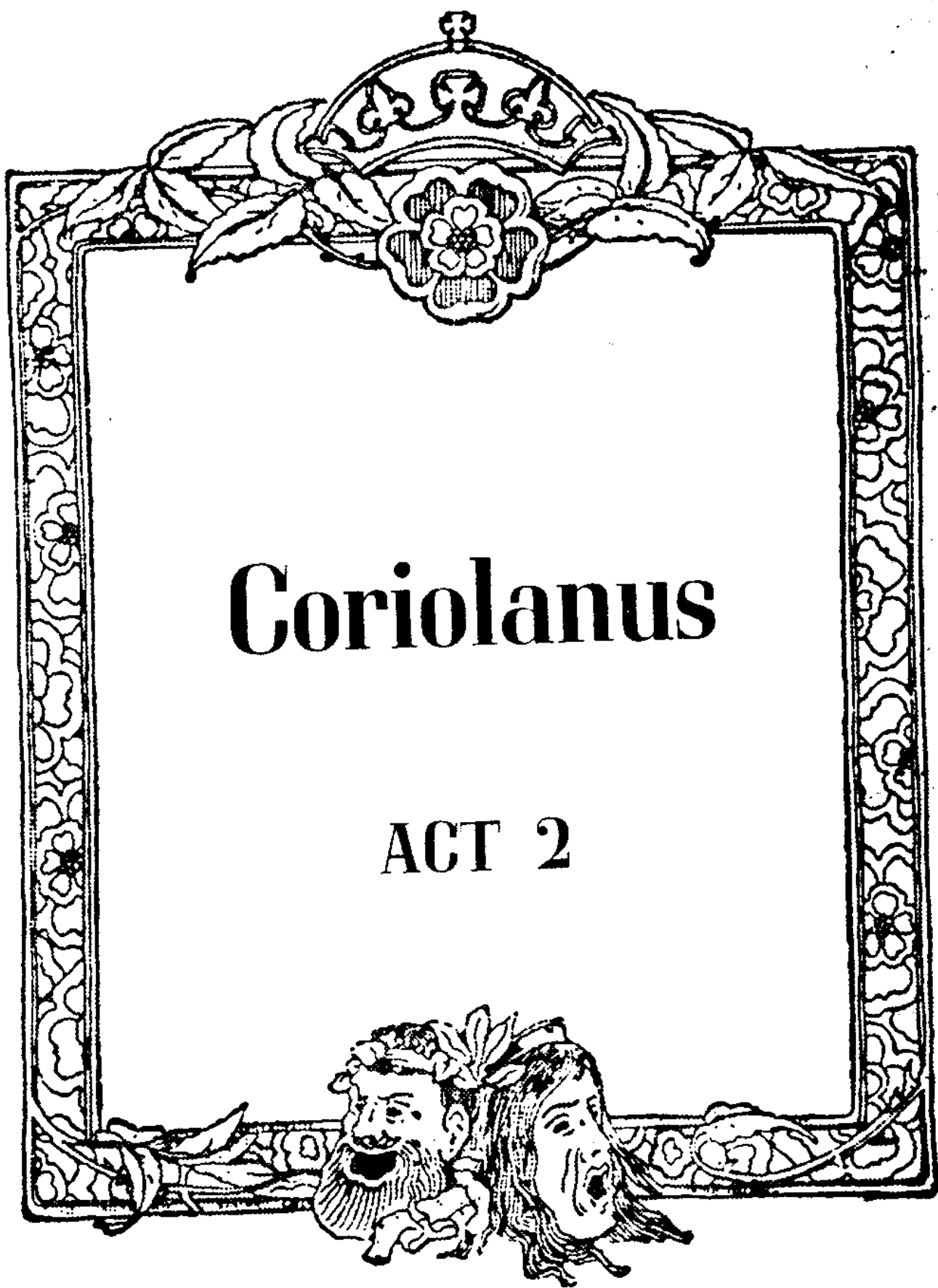
[*Exeunt.*]

¹ Embarquements: embargoes; restraints.

² upon my brother's guard: under my brother's protection.

³ hospitable canon: law of hospitality.

⁴ attended: awaited.



Coriolanus

ACT 2

ACT II

BACK in Rome, Menenius criticizes the two tribunes, Sicinius and Brutus, for censuring Coriolanus' pride and later he is joined by Volumnia, Virgilia and her friend Valeria who tell him of Coriolanus' victory. Coriolanus returns in triumph and Brutus and Sicinius fear that he will get the consulship for which he has been nominated by the patricians. Coriolanus reluctantly allows himself to be praised before the assembly at the Senate House and then, in accordance with custom, he goes to the Forum to ask for the citizens' votes. The citizens are inclined to support him, but as soon as he leaves, Brutus and Sicinius persuade them that he is an enemy of the people.

ACT II. SCENE I.

Rome. A public place.

*Enter MENENIUS, with the two TRIBUNES of the people,
SICINIUS and BRUTUS.*

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

The augurer¹ tells me we shall have news to-night.

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

Good or bad?

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

Not according to the prayer of the people, for they love not
Marcius.

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

Nature teaches beasts to know their friends.

¹ augurer: religious official who prophesied future events from omens.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

Pray you, who does the wolf love?

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

The lamb.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

Ay, to devour him; as the hungry plebeians would the noble Marcius.

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

He's a lamb indeed, that baes like a bear.

* MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

He's a bear indeed, that lives like a lamb. You two are old men: tell me one thing that I shall ask you.

BOTH.

Well, sir.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

In what enormity is Marcius poor in, that you two have not in abundance? ¹

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

He's poor in no one fault, but stored with all.

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

Especially in pride.

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

And topping all others in boasting.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

This is strange now: do you two know how you are censured ² here in the city, I mean of us o'the right-hand file? ³ do you?

BOTH.

Why, how are we censured?

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

Because you talk of pride now,—will you not be angry?

¹ In . . . abundance?: what monstrous fault does Marcius lack that you two do not have in good measure?

² censured: judged.

³ the right-hand file: the patricians.

BOTH.

Well, well, sir, well.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

Why, 'tis no great matter; for a very little thief of occasion¹ will rob you of a great deal of patience: give your dispositions the reins,² and be angry at your pleasures; at the least, if you take it as a pleasure to you in being so. You blame Marcius for being proud?

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

We do it not alone, sir.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

I know you can do very little alone; for your helps are many, or else your actions would grow wondrous single:³ your abilities are too infant-like for doing much alone. You talk of pride:—O that you could turn your eyes toward the napes of your necks, and make but an interior survey of your good selves! O that you could!

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

What then, sir?

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

Why, then you should discover a brace of unmeriting,⁴ proud, violent, testy magistrates, alias fools, as any in Rome.

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

Menenius, you are known well enough too.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

I am known to be a humorous⁵ patrician, and one that loves a cup of hot wine with not a drop of allaying Tiber⁶ in't; said to be something imperfect in favouring the first complaint;⁷ hasty and tinder-like upon too trivial motion;⁸ one that con-

¹ a very . . . occasion: a very slight and unexpected cause.

² give your dispositions the reins: let your emotions take over.

³ single: feeble. ⁴ unmeriting: undeserving. ⁵ humorous: whimsical.

⁶ allaying Tiber: diluting water. ⁷ something . . . complaint: somewhat too hasty in taking sides in an argument. ⁸ mo-

tion: impulse.

verses more with the buttock of the night than with the forehead of the morning: what I think I utter and spend my malice in my breath.¹ Meeting two such wealsmen² as you are,—I cannot call you Lycurguses,³—if the drink you give me touch my palate adversely, I make a crooked face at it. I cannot say your worships have deliver'd the matter well, when I find the ass⁴ in compound with the major part of your syllables: and though I must be content to bear with those that say you are reverend grave men, yet they lie deadly that tell you you have good faces. If you see this in the map of my microcosm,⁵ follows it that I am known well enough too? what harm can your bisson conspectuities⁶ glean out of this character, if I be known well enough too?

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

Come, sir, come, we know you well enough.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

You know neither me, yourselves, nor any thing. You are ambitious for poor knaves' caps and legs: you wear out a good wholesome forenoon in hearing a cause between an orange-wife⁷ and a fosset-seller;⁸ and then rejoin⁹ the controversy of threepence to a second day of audience. When you are hearing a matter between party and party, if you chance to be pincht with the colic, you make faces like mummers,¹⁰ set up the bloody flag against all patience; and, in roaring for a chamber-pot, dismiss the controversy bleeding, the more entangled by your hearing: all the peace you make in their cause is, calling both the parties knaves. You are a pair of strange ones.

¹ breath: words. ² wealsmen: statemen. ³ Lycurguses: lawgivers; Lycurgus was the founder of the Spartan Constitution. ⁴ the ass: folly. ⁵ the map of my microcosm: i.e., my face. ⁶ bisson conspectuities: blinded sight. ⁷ orange-wife: street seller of oranges. ⁸ fosset-seller: seller of taps for wine barrels. ⁹ rejoin: adjourn; postpone. ¹⁰ mummers: pantomimists.

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

Come, come, you are well understood to be a perfecter giber for the table than a necessary bencher in the Capitol.¹

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

Our very priests must become mockers, if they shall encounter such ridiculous subjects as you are. When you speak best unto the purpose, it is not worth the wagging of your beards; and your beards deserve not so honourable a grave as to stuff a botcher's² cushion, or to be entomb'd in an ass's pack-saddle. Yet you must be saying, Marcius is proud; who, in a cheap estimation, is worth all your predecessors since Deucalion;³ though peradventure some of the best of 'em were hereditary hangmen. God-den⁴ to your worships: more of your conversation would infect my brain; being⁵ the herdsmen of the beastly plebeians: I will be bold to take my leave of you.

[BRUTUS and SICINIUS go aside.]

Enter VOLUMNIA, VIRGILIA, and VALERIA, with ATTENDANTS.

How now, my as fair as noble ladies,—and the moon, were she earthly, no nobler,—whither do you follow your eyes so fast?

VOLUMNIA.

Honourable Menenius, my boy Marcius approaches; for the love of Juno, let's go.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

Ha! Marcius coming home!

VOLUMNIA.

Ay, worthy Menenius; and with most prosperous approbation.

¹. . . a perfecter giber . . . Capitol: a better jester at the dinner table than a member of the Senate. ² botcher's: a botcher is a man who patches clothes; hence, a tailor. ³ Deucalion: a Greek mythological character who, after Jove's flood, turned stones into men. ⁴ Godden: good evening ("God give you good even"). ⁵ being: since you are.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

Take my cap, Jupiter,¹ and I thank thee.—Hoo!
Marcius coming home!

VIRGILIA *and* VALERIA.

Nay, 'tis true.

VOLUMNIA.

Look, here's a letter from him: the state² hath another, his wife another; and, I think, there's one at home for you.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

I will make my very house reel to-night:—a letter for me!

VIRGILIA.

Yes, certain, there's a letter for you; I saw't.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

A letter for me! it gives me an estate of seven years' health; in which time I will make a lip³ at the physician: the most sovereign⁴ prescription in Galen⁵ is but empiric⁶ cutic,⁶ and, to this preservative, of no better report than a horse-drench.⁷—Is he not wounded? he was wont to come home wounded.

VIRGILIA.

O, no, no, no.

VOLUMNIA.

O, he is wounded; I thank the gods for't.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

So do I too, if it be not too much: brings a victory in his pocket? the wounds become him.

VOLUMNIA.

On's brows: Menenius, he comes the third time home with the oaken garland.

¹ Take my cap, Jupiter: Menenius throws his cap high in the air as a salute to success (Jupiter). ² the state: the Senate. ³ make a lip: curl my lip in scorn. ⁴ sovereign: effective. ⁵ Galen: a famous Greek physician born in Asia Minor in A.D. 129. ⁶ empiric: empirical; experimental. ⁷ horse-drench: purge for a horse.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

Has he disciplined Aufidius soundly?

VOLUMNIA.

Titus Lartius writes,—they fought together, but Aufidius got off.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

And 'twas time for him too, I'll warrant him that: an¹ he had stay'd by him, I would not have been so fidiu's'd² for all the chests in Corioli, and the gold that's in them. Is the senate possest³ of this?

VOLUMNIA.

Good ladies, let's go.—Yes, yes, yes; the senate has letters from the general, wherein he gives my son the whole name of⁴ the war: he hath in this action out-done his former deeds doubly.

VALERIA.

In troth,⁵ there's wondrous things spoke of him.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

Wondrous! ay, I warrant you, and not without his true purchasing.

VIRGILIA.

The gods grant them true!

VOLUMNIA.

True! pow, wow.⁶

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

True! I'll be sworn they are true.—Where is he wounded?—*[to the TRIBUNES]* God save your good worships! Marcius is coming home: he has more cause to be proud.—Where is he wounded?

VOLUMNIA.

I'the shoulder and i'the left arm: there will be large cicatrices⁷ to show the people, when he shall stand for his place.⁸ He received in the repulse of Tarquin seven hurts i'the body.

¹ an: if. ² fidiu's'd: treated as Aufidius deserved to be treated by Marcius. ³ possest: informed. ⁴ whole name of: complete credit for. ⁵ In troth: in truth. ⁶ pow, wow: Volumnia is scoffing at the idea of the news not being true. ⁷ cicatrices: scars. ⁸ when he . . . place: when he stands for election as consul.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

One i'the neck, and two i'the thigh,—there's nine that I know.

VOLUMNIA.

He had, before this last expedition, twenty-five wounds upon him.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

Now it's twenty-seven: every gash was an enemy's grave.
[*A shout and flourish.*] Hark! the trumpets.

VOLUMNIA.

These are the ushers¹ of Marcius: before him he carries noise,
and behind him he leaves tears:

Death, that dark spirit, in's nervy² arm doth lie;
Which, being advanced,³ declines,⁴ and then men die.

*A sennet. Trumpets sound. Enter COMINIUS the General and
TITUS LARTIUS; between them, CORIOLANUS, crown'd with an
oaken garland; with CAPTAINS and SOLDIERS, and a HERALD.*

HERALD.

Know, Rome, that all alone Marcius did fight
Within Corioli gates: where he hath won,
With fame, a name to Caius Marcius; these
In honour follows Coriolanus.

Welcome to Rome, renowned Coriolanus!

[*Flourish.*]

ALL.

Welcome to Rome, renowned Coriolanus!

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

No more of this, it does offend my heart;
Pray now, no more.

COMINIUS.

Look, sir, your mother!

¹ ushers: escorts.

² nervy: sinewy.

³ advanced: raised.

⁴ declines: falls.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

O,

You have, I know, petition'd all the gods
For my prosperity.

[Kneels.]

VOLUMNIA.

Nay, my good soldier, up;
My gentle Marcius, worthy Caius, and
By deed-achieving honour¹ newly named,—
What is it?—Coriolanus must I call thee?—
But, O, thy wife!

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

My gracious silence, hail!
Wouldst thou have laugh'd had I come coffin'd home,
That weep'st to see me triumph? Ah, my dear,²
Such eyes the widows in Corioli wear,
And mothers that lack sons.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

Now, the gods crown thee!

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

And live you yet?—[to VALERIA] O my sweet lady, pardon.

VOLUMNIA.

I know not where to turn:—O, welcome home;—
And welcome, general; and y'are welcome all.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

A hundred thousand welcomes:—I could weep,
And I could laugh; I am light and heavy:³—welcome:
A curse begin at very root on's heart
That is not glad to see thee!—You are three
That Rome should dote on: yet, by the faith of man,

¹ deed-achieving honour: honor coming from a deed well done.

² my dear: a term of strong endearment in Shakespeare's time.

³ light and heavy: both happy and serious.

We have some old crab-trees¹ here at home that will not
 Be grafted to your relish.² Yet welcome, warriors:
 We call a nettle but a nettle, and
 The faults of fools but folly.

COMINIUS.

Ever right.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

Menenius ever,³ ever.

HERALD.

Give way there, and go on!

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS [*to VOLUMNIA and VIRGILIA*].

Your hand, and yours:

Ere in our own house I do shade my head,
 The good patricians must be visited;
 From whom I have received not only greetings,
 But with them change of honours.

VOLUMNIA.

I have lived

To see inherited⁴ my very wishes,
 And the buildings of my fancy:⁵ only there
 Is one thing wanting,⁶ which I doubt not but
 Our Rome will cast upon thee.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

Know, good mother,

I had rather be their servant in my way
 Than sway with⁷ them in theirs.

COMINIUS.

On, to the Capitol!

[*Flourish. Cornets. Exeunt in state, as before. BRUTUS and
 SICINIUS come forward.*]

¹ crab-trees: crab-apple trees; that is, the disapproving (sour) tribunes. ² Be . . . relish: be altered to suit your taste. ³ Menenius ever: always the same Menenius. ⁴ inherited: possessed. ⁵ the buildings . . . fancy: my air castles. ⁶ wanting: lacking. ⁷ sway with: rule.

JUNIUS BRUTUS

All tongues speak of him, and the bleared sights
Are spectacled to see him:¹ your prattling nurse
Into a rapture lets her baby cry
While she chats him:² the kitchen malkin³ pins
Her richest lockram⁴ 'bout her reechy⁵ neck,
Clamb'ring the walls to eye him: stalls, bulks, windows,
Are smother'd up, leads⁶ fill'd, and ridges horsed⁷
With variable complexions;⁸ all agreeing
In earnestness to see him: seld-shown flamens⁹
Do press among the popular throngs, and puff
To win a vulgar station: our veil'd dames
Commit the war of white and damask in
Their nicely-gawded cheeks to the wanton spoil
Of Phœbus' burning kisses:¹⁰ such a pother,¹¹
As if that whatsoever god who leads him
Were sily crept into his human powers,
And gave him graceful posture.

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

On the sudden,

I warrant him consul.

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

Then our office may,

During his power, go sleep.

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

He cannot temperately transport his honours
From where he should begin and end; but will
Lose those he hath won.

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

In that there's comfort.

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

Doubt not

The commoners, for whom we stand, but they,

¹ the bleared . . . him: the dim-sighted put on glasses to look at him. ² chats him: chatters about him. ³ kitchen malkin: scullery maid. ⁴ lockram: cheap linen collar. ⁵ reechy: dirty. ⁶ leads: roofs. ⁷ ridges horsed: ridgepoles straddled. ⁸ With variable complexions: with people of all kinds. ⁹ seld-shown flamens: seldom-seen priests. ¹⁰ Phœbus' burning kisses: the hot rays of the sun. ¹¹ pother: to-do.

Upon their ancient malice, will forget,
 With the least cause, these his new honours; which¹
 That he will give them make I as little question
 As he is proud to do't.

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

I heard him swear,
 Were he to stand for consul, never would he
 Appear i'the market-place, nor on him put
 The napless vesture of humility;²
 Nor, showing, as the manner is, his wounds
 To the people, beg their stinking breaths.³

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

'Tis right.

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

It was his word: O, he would miss it, rather
 Than carry it but by the suit of the gentry⁴ to him,
 And the desire of the nobles.

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

I wish no better
 Than have him hold that purpose, and to put it
 In execution.

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

'Tis most like⁵ he will.

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

It shall be to him, then, as our good wills,
 A sure destruction.

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

So it must fall out
 To him or our authorities. For an end,⁶
 We must suggest⁷ the people in what hatred
 He still⁸ hath held them; that to's power he would
 Have made them mules,⁹ silenced their pleaders, and

¹ which: which cause. ² The napless . . . humility: the worn toga denoting humility. ³ breaths: voices (of approbation). ⁴ but . . . gentry: except at the request of the gentlemen. ⁵ like: likely. ⁶ For an end: to bring the matter to a conclusion. ⁷ suggest: remind. ⁸ still: always. ⁹ mules: beasts of burden.

Dispropertied ¹ their freedoms; holding them,
In human action and capacity,
Of no more soul nor fitness for the world
Than camels in the war; who have their provand ²
Only for bearing burdens, and sore blows
For sinking under them.

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

This, as you say, suggested

At some time when his soaring insolence
Shall touch the people,—which time shall not want
If he be put upon't,³ and that's as easy
As to set dogs on sheep,—will be his fire⁴
To kindle their dry stubble; and their blaze
Shall darken him for ever.⁵

Enter a MESSENGER.

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

What's the matter?

MESSENGER.

You are sent for to the Capitol. 'Tis thought
That Marcius shall be consul:
I have seen the dumb men throng to see him, and
The blind to hear him speak: matrons flung gloves,
Ladies and maids their scarfs and handkerchers,
Upon him as he past: the nobles bended,
As to Jove's statue; and the commons made
A shower and thunder with their caps and shouts:
I never saw the like.

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

Let's to the Capitol;
And carry with us ears and eyes for the time,⁶
But hearts for the event.⁷

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

Have with you.⁸

[*Exeunt.*]

¹ **Dispropertied:** deprived them of. ² **provand:** provender; fodder.
³ **put upon't:** provoked to it. ⁴ **will . . . fire:** will be like a fire in
him. ⁵ **darken him for ever:** blacken his name forever. ⁶ **for the
time:** for the present. ⁷ **hearts for the event:** keep our minds on
the outcome. ⁸ **Have with you:** let's go.

SCENE II.

The same. The Capitol.

Enter two OFFICERS, to lay cushions, as it were, in the Capitol.

FIRST OFFICER.

Come, come, they are almost here. How many stand for consulships?

SECOND OFFICER.

Three, they say: but 'tis thought of¹ every one Coriolanus will carry² it.

FIRST OFFICER.

That's a brave fellow; but he's vengeance³ proud, and loves not the common people.

SECOND OFFICER.

Faith, there have been many great men that have flatter'd the people, who ne'er loved them; and there be many that they have loved, they know not wherefore;⁴ so that, if they love they know not why, they hate upon no better a ground: therefore, for Coriolanus neither to care whether they love or hate him manifests the true knowledge he has in⁵ their disposition; and, out of his noble carelessness, lets them plainly see't.

FIRST OFFICER.

If he did not care whether he had their love or no, he'd waved⁶ indifferently 'twixt doing them neither good nor harm: but he seeks their hate with greater devotion than they can render it him; and leaves nothing undone that may fully discover⁷ him their opposite.⁸ Now, to seem to affect⁹

¹ of: by. ² carry: win. ³ vengeance: with a vengeance.

⁴ wherefore: why. ⁵ in: concerning. ⁶ waved: wavered.

⁷ discover: reveal. ⁸ opposite: enemy. ⁹ affect: desire.

the malice and displeasure of the people is as bad as that which he dislikes,—to flatter them for their love.

SECOND OFFICER.

He hath deserved worthily of his country: and his ascent is not by such easy degrees as those who, having been supple¹ and courteous to the people, bonneted,² without any further deed to heave them at all into their estimation and report:³ but he hath so planted his honours in their eyes, and his actions in their hearts, that for their tongues to be silent, and not confess so much, were a kind of ingrateful⁴ injury; to report otherwise were a malice, that, giving itself the lie,⁵ would pluck reproof and rebuke from every ear that heard it.

FIRST OFFICER.

No more of him; he's a worthy man: make way, they are coming.

A sennet. Enter the PATRICIANS and the TRIBUNES of the People, LICTORS⁶ before them: CORIOLANUS, MENENIUS, COMINIUS the Consul: SICINIUS and BRUTUS take their places by themselves: CORIOLANUS stands.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

Having determined of⁷ the Volscies, and
To send for Titus Lartius, it remains,
As the main point of this our after-meeting,
To gratify his noble service that
Hath thus stood for his country: therefore, please you,
Most reverend and grave elders, to desire
The present consul, and last general
In our well-found⁸ successes, to report
A little of that worthy work perform'd
By Caius Marcius Coriolanus; whom

¹ supple: obsequious. ² bonneted: with their hats off; that is, behaving in a deferential manner. ³ their estimation and report: popularity. ⁴ ingrateful: ungrateful. ⁵ giving itself the lie: showing its own falsehood. ⁶ Lictors: Roman guards carrying the rods and axes symbolizing the consuls' authority. ⁷ determined of: made our decision about. ⁸ well-found: fortunate; auspicious.

We meet here, both to thank, and to remember
With honours like himself.¹

FIRST SENATOR.

Speak, good Cominius:
Leave nothing out for length, and make us think
Rather our state's defective for requital
Than we to stretch it out.²—[*to the TRIBUNES*] Masters o'the
people,
We do request your kindest ears; and, after,
Your loving motion toward the common body,
To yield what passes³ here.

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

We are convented⁴
Upon a pleasing treaty;⁵ and have hearts
Inclinable to honour and advance
The theme⁶ of our assembly.

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

Which the rather
We shall be blest to do, if he remember
A kinder value of the people than
He hath hereto prized them at.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

That's off,⁷ that's off;
I would you rather had been silent. Please you
To hear Cominius speak?

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

Most willingly:
But yet my caution was more pertinent
Than the rebuke you give it.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

He loves your people;
But tie him not to be their bedfellow.—
Worthy Cominius, speak.—[CORIOLANUS rises, and offers to

¹ like himself: worthy of him. ² make us . . . out: rather make us think that Rome lacks the means to compensate him than that we are unwilling to be magnanimous. ³ passes: is voted. ⁴ convented: convened; summoned together. ⁵ treaty: proposal. ⁶ The theme: i.e., Coriolanus. ⁷ That's off: forget about that.

go away.] Nay, keep your place.

FIRST SENATOR.

Sit, Coriolanus; never shame to hear
What you have nobly done.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

Your honours' pardon
 I had rather have my wounds to heal again
 Than hear say how I got them.

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

Sir, I hope

My words disbencht you not.¹

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

No, sir: yet oft,
When blows have made me stay, I fled from words.
You sooth'd ² not, therefore hurt not: but your people,
I love them as they weigh.³

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

Pray now, sit down.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

I had rather have one scratch my head i'the sun,
When the alarum were struck, than idly sit
To hear my nothings monster'd.⁴

[Exit.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

Masters of the people,

Your multiplying spawn how can he flatter—
That's thousand to one good one⁵—when you now see
He had rather venture all his limbs for honour
Than one on's⁶ ears to hear't?—Proceed, Cominius.

COMINIUS.

I shall lack voice: the deeds of Coriolanus
Should not be utter'd feebly.—It is held

¹ **disbencht you not:** did not cause you to rise. ² **sooth'd:** flattered.

^a as they weigh: according to their value. ⁴ monster'd: monstrously exaggerated. ⁵ That's thousand . . . one: in whom there is only one good man in a thousand. ⁶ one on's: one of his.

That valour is the chiefest virtue, and
Most dignifies the haver: if it be,
The man I speak of cannot in the world
Be singly counterpoised.¹ At sixteen years,
When Tarquin made a head for² Rome, he fought
Beyond the mark of others: our then dictator,
Whom with all praise I point at, saw him fight,
When with his Amazonian³ chin he drove
The bristled lips before him: he bestrid
An o'er-prest Roman, and i'the consul's view
Slew three opposers: Tarquin's self he met,
And struck him on his knee: in that day's feats,
When he might act the woman in the scene,
He proved best man i'the field, and for his meed.⁴
Was brow-bound with the oak.⁵ His pupil age
Man-enter'd thus, he waxed like a sea;
And, in the brunt of seventeen battles since,
He lurcht⁶ all swords of the garland. For this last,
Before and in Corioli, let me say,
I cannot speak him home:⁷ he stopt the fliers;
And by his rare example made the coward
Turn terror into sport: as weeds before
A vessel under sail, so men obey'd,
And fell below his stem:⁸ his sword, death's stamp
Where it did mark, it took; from face to foot
He was a thing of blood, whose every motion
Was timed with dying cries: alone he enter'd
The mortal⁹ gate of the city, which he painted
With shunless destiny;¹⁰ aidless came off,
And with a sudden re-enforcement struck
Corioli like a planet: now all's his:
When, by and by, the din of war gan pierce

¹ Be singly counterpoised: be equaled by any one man. ² made a head for: raised an army against. ³ Amazonian: unbearded (the Amazons were female warriors). ⁴ meed: reward. ⁵ the oak: a garland of oak leaves was a symbol of victory. ⁶ lurcht: robbed. ⁷ speak him home: praise him adequately enough. ⁸ stem: prow. ⁹ mortal: deadly. ¹⁰ painted . . . destiny: made red with the blood of their inevitable doom.

His ready sense; then straight his doubled spirit
Re-quicken'd what in flesh was fatigate,¹
And to the battle came he; where he did
Run reeking² o'er the lives of men, as if
'Twere a perpetual spoil: and till we call'd
Both field and city ours, he never stood³
To ease his breast with panting.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

Worthy man!

FIRST SENATOR.

He cannot but with measure fit the honours⁴
Which we devise him.

COMINIUS.

Our spoils he kickt at;⁵
And lookt upon things precious as they were
The common muck of the world: he covets less
Than misery itself would give; rewards
His deeds with doing them; and is content
To spend the time to end it.⁶

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

He's right noble:

Let him be call'd for.

FIRST SENATOR.

Call Coriolanus.

OFFICER.

He doth appear.

Enter CORIOLANUS.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

The senate, Coriolanus, are well pleased
To make thee consul.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

I do owe them still⁷

My life and services.

¹ fatigate: fatigued; exhausted.

² reeking: reeking of blood.

³ stood: stopped.

⁴ He cannot . . . honours: he cannot fail to measure up to the honors.

⁵ kickt at: scorned.

⁶ is content

. . . it: that is, action is the only reward he wishes.

⁷ still:

always.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

It then remains
That you do speak to the people.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

I do beseech you,
Let me o'erleap¹ that custom, for I cannot
Put on the gown,² stand naked, and entreat them,
For my wounds' sake, to give their suffrage:³ please you
That I may pass this doing.⁴

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

Sir, the people
Must have their voices; neither will they bate⁵
One jot of ceremony.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

Put them not to't:-
Pray you, go fit you to the custom; and
Take to you, as your predecessors have,
Your honour with your form.⁷

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

It is a part
That I shall blush in acting, and might well
Be taken from the people.

JUNIUS BRUTUS [*to SICINIUS*].

Mark you that?

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

To brag unto them,—thus I did, and thus;—
Show them th'unaching scars which I should hide,
As if I had received them for the hire
Of their breath⁸ only!—

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

Do not stand upon't.—⁹
We recommend to you, tribunes of the people,

¹ o'erleap: leap over; neglect. ² gown: threadbare toga. ³ suffrage: vote. ⁴ pass this doing: omit this action. ⁵ bate: abate; dispense with. ⁶ Put . . . to't: do not force the issue. ⁷ your form: the formalities of your election. ⁸ breath: votes; approval. ⁹ Do not . . . upon't: do not take a stand on it.

Our purpose to them;—and to our noble consul
Wish we all joy and honour.

SENATORS.

To Coriolanus come all joy and honour!

[*Flourish of cornets. Exeunt all but BRUTUS and SICINIUS.*

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

You see how he intends to use the people.

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

May they perceive's intent! He will require¹ them,
As if he did contemn² what he requested
Should be in them to give.

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

Come, we'll inform them
Of our proceedings here: on the market-place
I know they do attend us.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.

The same. The Forum.

Enter seven or eight CITIZENS.

FIRST CITIZEN.

Once,³ if he do require our voices, we ought not to deny him.

SECOND CITIZEN.

We may, sir, if we will.

THIRD CITIZEN.

We have power in ourselves to do it, but it is a power that
we have no power to do: for if he show us his wounds, and
tell us his deeds, we are to put our tongues into those
wounds, and speak for them; so, if he tell us his noble deeds,

¹ require: request; ask.

² contemn: despise.

³ Once: once and for all; in short.

we must also tell him our noble acceptance of them. Ingratitude is monstrous:¹ and for the multitude to be ingrateful, were to make a monster of the multitude; of the which we being members, should bring ourselves to be monstrous members.

FIRST CITIZEN.

And to make us no better thought of, a little help will serve; for once we stood up about the corn, he himself stuck not² to call us the many-headed multitude.

THIRD CITIZEN.

We have been call'd so of many; not that our heads are some brown, some black, some abram,³ some bald, but that our wits are so diversely colour'd: and truly I think, if all our wits were to issue out of one skull, they would fly east, west, north, south; and their consent of one direct way⁴ should be at once to all the points o'th'compass.

SECOND CITIZEN.

Think you so? Which way do you judge my wit would fly?

THIRD CITIZEN.

Nay, your wit will not so soon out as another man's will,—'tis strongly wedged up in a blockhead; but if it were at liberty, 'twould, sure, southward.

SECOND CITIZEN.

Why that way?

THIRD CITIZEN.

To lose itself in a fog; where being three parts melted away with rotten dews,⁵ the fourth would return for conscience' sake, to help to get thee a wife.

¹ monstrous: unnatural.

² stuck not: did not hesitate.

³ abram: auburn.

⁴ their consent . . . way: the nearest they could come to agreeing.

⁵ rotten dews: contagious vapors.

SECOND CITIZEN.

You are never without your tricks:—¹you may,² you may.

THIRD CITIZEN.

Are you all resolved to give your voices? But that's no matter, the greater part³ carries it. I say, if he would incline to the people, there was never a worthier man.—Here he comes, and in the gown of humility: mark his behaviour. We are not to stay all together, but to come by him where he stands, by ones, by twos, and by threes. He's to make his requests by particulars;⁴ wherein every one of us has a single⁵ honour, in giving him our own voices with our own tongues: therefore follow me, and I'll direct you how you shall go by him.

ALL.

Content, content.

[*Exeunt.*]

Enter CORIOLANUS, in a gown of humility, with MENENIUS.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

O sir, you are not right: have you not known
The worthiest men have done't?

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

What must I say?—

'I pray, sir,'—Plague upon't! I cannot bring
My tongue to such a pace. 'Look, sir, my wounds!
I got them in my country's service, when
Some certain of your brethren roar'd, and ran
From the noise of our own drums.'

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

O me, the gods!

You must not speak of that: you must desire them
To think upon you.

¹ tricks: jokes.

² you may: you may have your little joke.

³ greater part: majority.

⁴ by particulars: one by one.

⁵ single: separate.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

Think upon me! hang 'em!
I would they would forget me, like the virtues
Which our divines lose by 'em.¹

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

You'll mar all:
I'll leave you: pray you, speak to 'em, I pray you,
In wholesome manner.²

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

Bid them wash their faces,
And keep their teeth clean. [*Exit MENENIUS.*—So, here comes
a brace.

Enter two of the CITIZENS.

You know the cause, sir, of my standing here.

FIRST CITIZEN.

We do, sir; tell us what hath brought you to't.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

Mine own desert.

SECOND CITIZEN.

Your own desert!

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

Ay, not mine own desire.

FIRST CITIZEN.

How! not your own desire!

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

No, sir, 'twas never my desire yet to trouble the poor with
begging.

FIRST CITIZEN.

You must think, if we give you any thing, we hope to gain
by you.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

Well, then, I pray, your price o' ³ the consulship?

¹ like . . . 'em: as they forget the truths which our preachers vainly try to teach them.

² wholesome manner: reasonable way.

³ o': of.

FIRST CITIZEN.

The price is, to ask it kindly.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

Kindly! Sir, I pray, let me ha't:¹ I have wounds to show you, which shall be yours in private.—Your good voice, sir; what say you?

SECOND CITIZEN.

You shall ha't, worthy sir.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

A match,² sir.—There's in all two worthy voices begg'd.—I have your alms:³ adieu.

FIRST CITIZEN.

But this is something odd.

SECOND CITIZEN.

An 'twere to give again,—but 'tis no matter.

[*Exeunt the two CITIZENS.*]

Enter two other CITIZENS.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

Pray you now, if it may stand with the tune of your voices that I may be consul, I have here the customary gown.

THIRD CITIZEN.

You have deserved nobly of your country, and you have not deserved nobly.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

Your enigma?

THIRD CITIZEN.

You have been a scourge to her enemies, you have been a rod to her friends; you have not, indeed, loved the common people.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

You should account me the more virtuous, that I have not been common in my love. I will, sir, flatter my sworn brother,⁴

¹ ha't: have it.

² A match: agreed.

³ alms: a reference to himself as a beggar.

⁴ sworn brother: brother in arms.

the people, to earn a dearer¹ estimation of ² them; 'tis a condition they account gentle:³ and since the wisdom of their choice is rather to have my hat than my heart, I will practise the insinuating⁴ nod, and be off to them most counterfeitly;⁵ that is, sir, I will counterfeit the bewitchment of some popular man, and give it bountiful to the desirers. Therefore, beseech you I may be consul.

FOURTH CITIZEN.

We hope to find you our friend; and therefore give you our voices heartily.

THIRD CITIZEN.

You have received many wounds for your country.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

I will not seal your knowledge with showing them. I will make much of your voices, and so trouble you no further.

BOTH CITIZENS.

The gods give you joy, sir, heartily!

[*Exeunt.*]

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

Most sweet voices!—

Better it is to die, better to starve,
Than crave the hire which first we do deserve.
Why in this wolvish toge⁶ should I stand here,
To beg of Hob and Dick, that do appear,
Their needless vouches?⁷ Custom calls me to't:—
What custom wills, in all things should we do't,
The dust on antique time would lie unswept,
And mountainous error be too highly heapt
For truth to o'er-peer.⁸ Rather than fool it so,
Let the high office and the honour go
To one that would do thus.—I am half through;
The one part suffer'd, the other will I do.—

¹ dearer: more valuable. ² of: from. ³ condition . . . gentle: way of behavior which they consider the mark of a gentleman. ⁴ insinuating: flattering. ⁵ be off . . . counterfeitly: bare my head to them in a hypocritical fashion. ⁶ this wolvish toge: a threadbare toga which makes him appear like a wolf in sheep's clothing. ⁷ vouches: vouchers; guarantees. ⁸ o'er-peer: look over the top.

Here come moe¹ voices.

Enter three CITIZENS more.

Your voices: for your voices I have fought;
Watcht² for your voices; for your voices bear
Of wounds two dozen odd; battles thrice six
I have seen, and heard of; for your voices have
Done many things, some less, some more: your voices:
Indeed, I would be consul.

FIFTH CITIZEN.

He has done nobly, and cannot go without any honest man's
voice.

SIXTH CITIZEN.

Therefore let him be consul: the gods give him joy, and make
him good friend to the people!

ALL THREE CITIZENS.

Amen, amen.—God save thee, noble consul! [Exeunt.]

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

Worthy voices!

Enter MENENIUS, with BRUTUS and SICINIUS.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

You have stood your limitation;³ and the tribunes
Endue⁴ you with the people's voice: remains⁵
That, in the official marks invested,⁶ you
Anon do meet the senate.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

Is this done?

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

The custom of request⁷ you have discharged:
The people do admit you; and are summon'd
To meet anon, upon your approbation.⁸

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

Where? at the senate-house?

¹ moe: more. ² Watcht: lay sleepless at night; kept vigil. ³ limitation: allotted time. ⁴ Endue: endow. ⁵ remains: now all that remains is. ⁶ in the official marks invested: invested with the insignia of office. ⁷ The custom of request: the customary request for their approval. ⁸ upon your approbation: for confirmation of your appointment as consul.

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

There, Coriolanus.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

May I change these garments?

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

You may, sir.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

That I'll straight do;¹ and, knowing myself again,²
Repair to the senate-house.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

I'll keep you company.—Will you along?

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

We stay here for the people.

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

Fare you well.

[*Exeunt* CORIOLANUS and MENENIUS.]

He has it now; and, by his looks, methinks

'Tis warm at's heart.³

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

With a proud heart he wore
His humble weeds.⁴—Will you dismiss the people?

Enter CITIZENS.

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

How now, my masters! have you chose this man?

FIRST CITIZEN.

He has our voices, sir.

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

We pray the gods he may deserve your loves.

SECOND CITIZEN.

Amen, sir:—to my poor unworthy notice,
He mockt us when he begg'd our voices.

¹ straight do: do immediately.

² knowing myself again: in my proper apparel.

³ 'Tis warm at's heart: the knowledge warms his heart.

⁴ weeds: garments.

THIRD CITIZEN.

Certainly,

He flouted ¹ us downright.

FIRST CITIZEN.

No, 'tis his kind of speech,—he did not mock us.

SECOND CITIZEN.

Not one amongst us, save yourself, but says
He used us scornfully; he should have show'd us
His marks of merit, wounds received for's country.

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

Why, so he did, I am sure.

ALL THE CITIZENS.

No, no; no man saw 'em.

THIRD CITIZEN.

He said he had wounds, which he could show in private;
And with his hat, thus waving it in scorn,
'I would be consul,' says he; 'aged custom
But by your voices will not so permit me;
Your voices therefore:' when we granted that,
Here was, 'I thank you for your voices,—thank you,—
Your most sweet voices:—now you have left your voices,
I have no further with you:'—was not this mockery?

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

Why either were you ignorant to see't,
Or, seeing it, of such childish friendliness
To yield your voices?

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

Could you not have told him,
As you were lesson'd,²—when he had no power,
But was a petty servant to the state,

¹ flouted: scorned; mocked.

² lesson'd: instructed; coached.

He was your enemy; ever spake against
 Your liberties, and the charters¹ that you bear
 I'the body of the weal;² and now, arriving
 A place of potency,³ and sway o'the state,
 If he should still malignantly remain
 Fast foe to the plebeii,⁴ your voices might
 Be curses to yourselves? You should have said,
 That as his worthy deeds did claim no less
 Than what he stood for, so his gracious nature
 Would think upon you for your voices, and
 Translate⁵ his malice towards you into love,
 Standing your friendly lord.

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

Thus to have said,
 As you were fore-advised, had toucht his spirit
 And tried⁶ his inclination; from him pluckt
 Either his gracious promise, which you might,
 As cause had call'd you up, have held him to;
 Or else it would have gall'd⁷ his surly nature,
 Which easily endures not article⁸
 Tying him to aught; so, putting him to rage,
 You should have ta'en th'advantage of his choler,⁹
 And past him unelected.

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

Did you perceive
 He did solicit you in free¹⁰ contempt,
 When he did need your loves; and do you think
 That his contempt shall not be bruising to you,
 When he hath power to crush? Why, had your bodies
 No heart¹¹ among you? or had you tongues to cry
 Against the rectorship of judgement? ¹²

¹ charters: privileges. ² weal: commonwealth. ³ A place of potency: at a position of authority. ⁴ plebeii: plebeians. ⁵ Translate: transfer. ⁶ tried: tested. ⁷ gall'd: rubbed raw. ⁸ article: condition. ⁹ choler: anger. ¹⁰ free: openly expressed. ¹¹ heart: courage. ¹² Against the rectorship of judgement: contrary to the rule of wisdom (reason).

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

Have you,
Ere now, denied the asker? and now again,
Of him that did not ask, but mock, bestow
Your sued-for tongues? ¹

THIRD CITIZEN.

He's not confirm'd; we may deny him yet.

SECOND CITIZEN.

And will deny him;
I'll have five hundred voices of that sound.²

FIRST CITIZEN.

I twice five hundred, and their friends to piece³ 'em.

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

Get you hence instantly; and tell those friends
They have chose a consul that will from them take
Their liberties; make them of no more voice
Than dogs, that are as often beat for barking
As therefore kept to do so.

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

Let them assemble;
And, on a safer⁴ judgement, all revoke
Your ignorant election: enforce⁵ his pride,
And his old hate unto you: besides, forget not
With what contempt he wore the humble weed;
How in his suit he scorn'd you; but your loves,
Thinking upon his services, took from you
Th'apprehension of his present portance, which
Most gibingly, ungravely, he did fashion
After⁶ the inveterate hate he bears you.

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

Lay
A fault on us, your tribunes; that we labour'd,
No impediment between, but that you must
Cast your election on him.⁷

¹ Have you . . . tongues?: have you not in the past refused to vote for some who asked for your votes, and now do you give your votes to someone who does not ask for them but mocks you? ² sound: negative voice. ³ piece: augment. ⁴ safer: more trustworthy. ⁵ enforce: emphasize. ⁶ After: according to. ⁷ we labour'd . . . on him: we tried hard not to stand in the way of your electing him.

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

Say you chose him
More after our commandment than as guided
By your own true affections; and that your minds,
Pre-occupied with what you rather must do
Than what you should, made you against the grain¹
To voice² him consul: lay the fault on us.

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

Ay, spare us not. Say we read lectures to you,
How youngly he began to serve his country,
How long continued; and what stock he springs of,—
The noble house o'the Marcians; from whence came
That Ancus Marcius, Numa's daughter's son,
Who, after great Hostilius, here was king;
Of the same house Publius and Quintus were,
That our best water brought by conduits hither;
And Censorinus, nobly named so,
Twice being by the people chosen censor,
Was his great ancestor.³

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

One thus descended,
That hath beside well in his person wrought
To be set high in place, we did commend
To your remembrances; but you have found,
Scaling⁴ his present bearing with his past,
That he's your fixed enemy, and revoke
Your sudden⁵ approbation.

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

Say you ne'er had done't—
Harp on that still—but by our putting on:⁶

¹ against the grain: against your natural inclination. ² voice: vote.
³ Of the same house . . . ancestor: this passage in Plutarch reads:
"of this same house were Publius and Quintus, who brought to
Rome their best water they had by conduits. Censorinus also came
of that family, that was so surnamed because the people had chosen
him *Censor* twice." ⁴ Scaling: weighing; balancing. ⁵ sudden:
hasty. ⁶ putting on: urging.

And presently, when you have drawn your number,¹
Repair to the Capitol.

ALL THE CITIZENS.

We will so: almost all
Repent in their election.

[*Exeunt.*]

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

Let them go on;
This mutiny were better put in hazard,
Than stay, past doubt, for greater:²
If, as his nature is, he fall in rage
With their refusal, both observe and answer
The vantage of his anger.³

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

To the Capitol, come:
We will be there before the stream o'the people;
And this shall seem, as partly 'tis, their own,⁴
Which we have goaded onward.

[*Exeunt.*]

¹ drawn your number: assembled sufficient support.

² This mutiny . . . greater: it is better to risk a riot now than to wait for a greater upheaval, which is sure to come.

³ answer . . . anger: make use of the advantage which his anger will give us.

⁴ their own: their own idea.



Coriolanus

ACT 3



ACT III

WHEN Brutus and Sicinius inform Coriolanus of the citizens' changed opinions, Coriolanus rounds on both the tribunes and the people, accusing them of mutiny in wartime and of a general lack of integrity. The tribunes then denounce him as a traitor and urge the citizens to kill him. The patricians manage to quell the rabble on condition that Coriolanus shall subsequently appear and answer to charges made against him. Coriolanus is eventually persuaded by his mother to agree, but at the Forum Sicinius and Brutus urge banishment on the grounds that he seeks tyrannical power. Coriolanus is too furious to try to win over the mob. As the plebeians clamor in support of the tribunes, he expresses his contempt and makes for the city gates, accompanied by jeering citizens.

ACT III. SCENE I.

Rome. A street.

Cornets. Enter CORIOLANUS, MENENIUS, all the GENTRY, COMINIUS, TITUS LARTIUS, and other SENATORS.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

Tullus Aufidius, then, had made new head? ¹

TITUS LARTIUS.

He had, my lord; and that it was which caused
Our swifter composition. ²

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

So, then, the Volscies stand but as at first;
Ready, when time shall prompt them, to make road
Upon's again. ³

¹ made new head: raised a new army.

² swifter composition: coming to a peace so soon.

³ make road/Upon's again: make another attack against us.

COMINIUS.

They are worn,¹ lord consul, so,
That we shall hardly in our ages see
Their banners wave again.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

Saw you Aufidius?

TITUS LARTIUS.

On safe-guard² he came to me; and did curse
Against the Volsces, for³ they had so vilely⁴
Yielded the town: he is retired to Antium.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

Spoke he of me?

TITUS LARTIUS.

He did, my lord.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

How? what?

TITUS LARTIUS.

How often he had met you, sword to sword;
That of all things upon the earth he hated
Your person most; that he would pawn his fortunes
To hopeless restitution,⁵ so he might
Be call'd your vanquisher.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

At Antium lives he?

TITUS LARTIUS.

At Antium.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

I wish I had a cause to seek him there,
To oppose his hatred fully. Welcome home.

Enter SICINIUS and BRUTUS.

Behold, these are the tribunes of the people,
The tongues o'th'common mouth: I do despise them;

¹ worn; exhausted.

² On safe-guard; under safe conduct.

³ for: because.

⁴ vilely: treacherously.

⁵ To hopeless restitution: beyond all hope of recovery.

For they do prank them¹ in authority,
Against all noble sufferance.²

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

Pass no further.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

Hal! what is that?

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

It will be dangerous to go on: no further.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

What makes this change?

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

The matter?

COMINIUS.

Hath he not past³ the noble and the common?

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

Cominius, no.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

Have I had children's voices?

FIRST SENATOR.

Tribunes, give way; he shall to the market-place.

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

The people are incensed against him.

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

Stop,

Or all will fall in broil.⁴

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

Are these your herd?—

Must these have voices, that can yield them now,

And straight disclaim their tongues?—What are your offices?

You being their mouths, why rule you not their teeth?

Have you not set them on?

¹ prank them: deck themselves.

² Against . . . sufferance: beyond the endurance of the nobles.

³ past: passed.

⁴ in broil: into quarreling (brawling).

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

Be calm, be calm.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

It is a purposed¹ thing, and grows by plot,
To curb the will of the nobility:
Suffer't,² and live with³ such as cannot rule,
Nor ever will be ruled.

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

Call't not a plot:

The people cry you mockt them; and of late,
When corn was given them gratis, you repined;⁴
Scandal'd⁵ the suppliants for the people,—call'd them
Time-pleasers,⁶ flatterers, foes to nobleness.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

Why, this was known before.

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

Not to them all.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

Have you inform'd them sithence?⁷

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

How! I inform them!

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

You are like⁸ to do such business.

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

Not unlike,

Each way, to better yours.⁹

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

Why, then, should I be consul? By yond clouds,
Let me deserve so ill as you, and make me
Your fellow tribune.

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

You show too much of that

¹ purposed: planned. ² Suffer't: allow it. ³ live with: you will have to live with. ⁴ repined: complained. ⁵ Scandal'd: slandered. ⁶ Time-pleasers: time-servers; idlers. ⁷ sithence: since. ⁸ like: likely. ⁹ Not . . . yours: I am apt to surpass your actions in this matter in every way.

For which the people stir: if you will pass
To where you are bound, you must inquire your way,
Which you are out of, with a gentler spirit;
Or never be so noble as a consul,
Nor yoke with¹ him for tribune.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

Let's be calm.

COMINIUS.

The people are abused;² set on.³ This paltering⁴
Becomes not Rome; nor has Coriolanus
Deserved this so dishonour'd rub,⁵ laid falsely⁶
I'the plain way of his merit.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

Tell me of corn!

This was my speech, and I will speak't again,—

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

Not now, not now.

FIRST SENATOR.

Not in this heat,⁷ sir, now.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

Now, as I live, I will.—My nobler friends,
I crave their pardons:—
For the mutable, rank-scented meiny,⁸ let them
Regard me as I do not flatter, and
Therein behold themselves: I say again,
In soothing them, we nourish 'gainst our senate
The cockle⁹ of rebellion, insolence, sedition,
Which we ourselves have plough'd for, sow'd, and scatter'd,
By mingling them with us, the honour'd number;
Who lack not virtue, no, nor power, but that
Which they have given to beggars.

¹ yoke with: serve with. ² abused: deceived; tricked. ³ set on: incited. ⁴ This paltering: this petty haggling. ⁵ rub: obstacle.
⁶ falsely: treacherously. ⁷ heat: heat of anger. ⁸ rank-scented meiny: ill-smelling herd. ⁹ cockle: cocklebur; noxious weed.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA

Well, no more.

FIRST SENATOR.

No more words, we beseech you.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

How! no more!

As for my country I have shed my blood,
Not fearing outward force, so shall my lungs
Coin words till their decay against those measles,¹
Which we disdain should tetter us,² yet sought
The very way to³ catch them.

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

You speak o'the people,
As if you were a god to punish, not
A man of their infirmity.⁴

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

'Twere well

We let the people know't.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

What, what? his choler?

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

Choler!

Were I as patient as the midnight sleep,
By Jove, 'twould be my mind!

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

It is a mind

That shall remain a poison where it is,
Not poison any further.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

Shall remain!—

Hear you this Triton⁵ of the minnows? mark you
His absolute 'shall'?

¹ those measles: these disease blots on the state.

² tetter us: cause us to break out in spots (like measles).

³ very way to: best way in which to.

⁴ infirmity: weaknesses; frailties.

⁵ Triton: trumpeter (Triton was the trumpeter of Neptune, the sea god).

COMINIUS.

'Twas from the canon.¹

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

'Shall'!

O good, but most unwise patricians! why,
You grave, but reckless senators, have you thus
Given Hydra² here to choose an officer,
That with his peremptory 'shall,' being but
The horn and noise o'th'monster, wants not spirit
To say he'll turn your current in a ditch,
And makes your channel his? If he have power,
Then vail³ your ignorance; if none, awake
Your dangerous lenity.⁴ If you are learn'd,
Be not as common fools; if you are not,
Let them have cushions by you.⁵ You are plebeians,
If they be senators: and they are no less,
When, both your voices blended, the great'st taste
Most palates⁶ theirs. They choose their magistrate;
And such a one as he, who puts his 'shall,'
His popular 'shall,' against a graver bench
Than ever frown'd in Greece. By Jove himself,
It makes the consuls base! and my soul aches
To know, when two authorities are up,
Neither supreme, how soon confusion⁷
May enter 'twixt the gap of both, and take
The one by th'other.

COMINIUS.

Well,—on to the market-place.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

Whoever gave that counsel, to give forth
The corn o'the storehouse gratis, as 'twas used
Sometime in Greece,—

¹ from the canon: against the rule. ² Hydra: the many-headed monster slain by Hercules. ³ vail: lower; humble. ⁴ awake . . . lenity: awake to an awareness of the danger that your soft attitude creates. ⁵ have cushions by you: sit on cushions beside you in the Senate. ⁶ palates: pleases. ⁷ confusion: ruin.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

Well, well, no more of that.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

Though there the people had more absolute power,—
I say, they nourisht disobedience, fed
The ruin of the state.

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

Why, shall the people give
One, that speaks thus, their voice?

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

I'll give my reasons,
More worthier than their voices. They know the corn
Was not their recompense, resting well assured
They ne'er did service for't: being prest to the war,¹
Even when the navel² of the state was toucht,
They would not thread the gates:³—this kind of service
Did not deserve corn gratis: being i'the war,
Their mutinies and revolts, wherein they show'd
Most valour, spoke not for them: th'accusation
Which they have often made against the senate,
All cause unborn,⁴ could never be the native⁵
Of our so frank⁶ donation. Well, what then?
How shall this bosom multiplied⁷ digest
The senate's courtesy? Let deeds express
What's like to be their words:—'We did request it;
We are the greater poll,⁸ and in true fear
They gave us our demands:'—thus we debase
The nature of our seats, and make the rabble
Call our cares⁹ fears; which will in time

¹ prest to the war: taken by force into the army; pressed into service. ² navel: center; heart. ³ thread the gates: pass through the gates (to war). ⁴ All cause unborn: without any justification whatsoever. ⁵ native: true reason. ⁶ frank: generous. ⁷ bosom multiplied: the rabble; the "rank-scented." ⁸ poll: number of votes. ⁹ cares: careful concern for the welfare of the people.

Break ope the locks o'the senate, and bring in
The crows to peck the eagles.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

Come, enough.

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

Enough, with over-measure.¹

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

No, take more:

What may be sworn by, both divine and human,
Seal ² what I end withall!—This double worship,—
Where one part does disdain with cause, the other
Insult without all reason; where gentry, title, wisdom,³
Cannot conclude⁴ but by the yea and no
Of general ignorance,⁵—it must omit
Real necessities, and give way the while
To unstable slightness:⁶ purpose so barr'd, it follows,
Nothing is done to purpose. Therefore, beseech you,—
You that will be less fearful than discreet;
That love the fundamental part of state
More than you doubt the change on't; that prefer
A noble life before a long, and wish
To jump⁷ a body with a dangerous physic
That's sure of death without it,—at once pluck out
The multitudinous tongue;⁸ let them not lick
The sweet which is their poison: your dishonour⁹
Mangles true judgement, and bereaves the state
Of that integrity which should become't;
Not having the power to do the good it would,
For th'ill which doth control't.

¹ over-measure: excess. ² Seal: confirm. ³ gentry, title, wisdom: the gentlemen, the nobles, and the wise men. ⁴ conclude: come to a decision. ⁵ general ignorance: the ignorance of the multitude. ⁶ unstable slightness: shifting pettiness. ⁷ jump: risk. ⁸ multitudinous tongue: voting power of the multitude (rabble). ⁹ your dishonour: the dishonorable state to which you have sunk.

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

'Has¹ said enough.

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

'Has spoken like a traitor, and shall answer
As traitors do.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

Thou wretch, despite² o'erwhelm thee!—
What should the people do with these bald tribunes?
On whom depending, their obedience fails
To the greater bench:³ in a rebellion,
When what's not meet,⁴ but what must be, was law,
Then were they chosen: in a better hour,
Let what is meet be said it must be meet,
And throw their power i'the dust.

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

Manifest treason!

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

This a consul? no.

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

The ædiles,⁵ hol

Enter an AEDILE.

Let him be apprehended.

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

Go, call the people [*exit AEDILE*]:—in whose name myself
Attach⁶ thee as a traitorous innovator,⁷
A foe to the public weal: obey, I charge thee,
And follow to thine answer.⁸

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

Hence, old goat!

¹ 'Has: he has. ² despite: contempt; malice. ³ greater bench: the Senate. ⁴ meet: appropriate. ⁵ ædiles: Roman officials, one of whose duties was to make arrests. ⁶ Attach: arrest. ⁷ innovator: agitator. ⁸ to thine answer: to answer the charges against you.

SENATORS, &c.

We'll surety¹ him.

COMINIUS.

Aged sir, hands off.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

Hence, rotten thing! or I shall shake thy bones
Out of thy garments.

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

Help, ye citizens!

Enter a rabble of CITIZENS, with the AEDILES.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

On both sides more respect.

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

Here's he that would take from you all your power.

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

Seize him, ædiles!

CITIZENS.

Down with him! down with him!

SENATORS, &c.

Weapons, weapons, weapons!

[They all bustle about CORIOLANUS.]

Tribunes!—Patricians!—Citizens!—What, ho!—

Sicinius!—Brutus!—Coriolanus!—Citizens!—

Peace, peace, peace!—Stay,² hold, peace!

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

What is about to be?—I am out of breath;

Confusion's near; I cannot speak.—You, tribunes

To the people!—Coriolanus, patience:—

Speak, good Sicinius.

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

Hear me, people; peace!

CITIZENS.

Let's hear our tribune: peace!—Speak, speak, speak.

¹ surety: stand bail for.

² Stay: wait.

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

You are at point to lose¹ your liberties:
Marcius would have all from you; Marcius
Whom late you have named for consul.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

Fie, fie, fie!

This is the way to kindle, not to quench.

FIRST SENATOR.

To unbuild the city, and to lay all flat.

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

What is the city but the people?

CITIZENS.

True,

The people are the city.

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

By the consent of all, we were establisht
The people's magistrates.

CITIZENS.

You so remain.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

And so are like to do.

COMINIUS.

That is the way to lay the city flat;
To bring the roof to the foundation,
And bury all, which yet distinctly ranges,²
In heaps and piles of ruin.

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

This deserves death.

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

Or let us stand to our authority,
Or let us lose it.—We do here pronounce,
Upon the part o' ³ the people, in whose power
We were elected theirs, Marcius is worthy

¹ at point to lose: on the point of losing.

² yet distinctly ranges: still stands out clearly in orderly rows.

³ Upon the part o': on behalf of.

Of present death.

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

Therefore lay hold of him;
Bear him to the rock Tarpeian,¹ and from thence
Into destruction cast him.

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

Aediles, seize him!

CITIZENS.

Yield, Marcius, yield!

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

Hear me one word:
Beseech you, tribunes, hear me but a word.

AEDILES.

Peace, peace!

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

Be that you seem, truly your country's friends,
And temperately proceed to what you would
Thus violently redress.

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

Sir, those cold ways,
That seem like prudent helps, are very poisonous
Where the disease is violent.—Lay hands upon him,
And bear him to the rock.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

No, I'll die here. [*Drawing his sword.*]
There's some among you have beheld me fighting:
Come, try upon yourselves what you have seen me.²

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

Down with that sword!—Tribunes, withdraw awhile.

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

Lay hands upon him.³

¹ rock Tarpeian: a high rock on the Capitoline Hill down which condemned criminals were thrown to their death.

² seen me: seen me do.

³ Lay hands upon him: arrest him.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

Help Marcius, help,
You that be noble; help him, young and old!

CITIZENS.

Down with him! down with him!

*[In this mutiny the TRIBUNES, the AEDILES, and the PEOPLE
are beat in.]*

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

Go, get you to your house; be gone, away!
All will be naught else.¹

SECOND SENATOR.

Get you gone.

COMINIUS.

Stand fast;

We have as many friends as enemies.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

Shall it be put to that?

FIRST SENATOR.

The gods forbid!—

I prithee, noble friend, home to thy house;
Leave us to cure this cause.²

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

For 'tis a sore upon us,
You cannot tent³ yourself: be gone, beseech you.

COMINIUS.

Come, sir, along with us.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

I would they were barbarians, as they are,
Though in Rome litter'd;⁴ not Romans, as they are not,
Though calved i'the porch o'the Capitol.—

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

Be gone;

¹ All . . . else: or all will be ruined.

² cause: disease.

³ tent: cleanse.

⁴ litter'd: whelped, like animals.

Put not your worthy rage into your tongue;
One time will owe another.¹

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

On fair ground
I could beat forty of them.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

I could myself
Take up a brace o'the best of them; yea, the two tribunes.

COMINIUS.

But now 'tis odds beyond arithmetic;
And manhood is call'd foolery, when it stands
Against a falling fabric.²—Will you hence,
Before the tag³ return? whose rage doth rend
Like interrupted waters,⁴ and o'erbear
What they are used to bear.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

Pray you, be gone:
I'll try whether my old wit be in request
With those that have but little: this must be patcht
With cloth of any colour.⁵

COMINIUS.

Nay, come away.

[*Exeunt* CORIOLANUS, COMINIUS, and others.]

FIRST PATRICIAN.

This man has marr'd his fortune.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

His nature is too noble for the world:
He would not flatter Neptune for his trident,
Or Jove for's power to thunder. His heart's his mouth:
What his breast forges, that his tongue must vent;

¹ One time . . . another: a better time will come.

² fabric: building; house.

³ tag: rag, tag, and bobtail; rabble.

⁴ interrupted waters: dammed-up waters.

⁵ this . . . colour: this quarrel must be mended with anything we can lay our hands on.

And, being angry, does forget that ever
He heard the name of death.—
Here's goodly work!

[A noise within.]

SECOND PATRICIAN.

I would they were a-bed!

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

I would they were in Tiber! ¹ What the vengeance! ²
Could he not speak 'em fair? ³

Enter BRUTUS and SICINIUS, with the rabble again.

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

Where is this viper,
That would depopulate the city, and
Be every man himself?

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

You worthy tribunes,—

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

He shall be thrown down the Tarpeian rock
With rigorous hands; he hath resisted law,
And therefore law shall scorn him further trial
Than the severity of the public power,
Which he so sets at naught.

FIRST CITIZEN.

He shall well know
The noble tribunes are the people's mouths,
And we their hands.

CITIZENS.

He shall, sure on't.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

Sir, sir,—

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

Peace!

¹ in Tiber: in the Tiber River.

² What the vengeance: an exclamation of impatience.

³ speak 'em fair: talk to them in a conciliatory manner.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

Do not cry havoc,¹ where you should but hunt
With modest warrant.

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

Sir, how comes't that you
Have help² to make this rescue?

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

Hear me speak:—

As I do know the consul's worthiness,
So can I name his faults,—

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

Consul!—what consul?

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

The consul Coriolanus.

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

He consull

CITIZENS.

No, no, no, no, no.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

If, by the tribunes' leave, and yours, good people,
I may be heard, I'd crave a word or two;
The which shall turn you to no further harm
Than so much loss of time.

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

Speak briefly, then;

For we are peremptory³ to dispatch
This viperous traitor: to eject him hence⁴
Were but our danger; and to keep him here
Our certain death: therefore it is decreed
He dies to-night.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

Now the good gods forbid
That our renowned Rome, whose gratitude
Towards her deserved children is enroll'd

¹ cry havoc: "no quarter"; a command often given in war in medieval times, meaning to battle to the death.

² help: helped.

³ peremptory: fully determined.

⁴ eject him hence: banish him.

In Jove's own book, like an unnatural dam¹
Should now eat up her own!

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

He's a disease that must be cut away.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

O, he's a limb that has but a disease;
Mortal,² to cut it off; to cure it, easy.
What has he done to Rome that's worthy³ death?
Killing our enemies, the blood he hath lost—
Which, I dare vouch, is more than that he hath,
By many an ounce—he dropt it for his country;
And what is left, to lose it by his country,
Were to us all, that do't and suffer it,⁴
A brand⁵ to the end o'the world.

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

This is clean kam.⁶

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

Merely⁷ awry: when he did love his country,
It honour'd him.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

The service of the foot
Being once gangrened, is not then respected
For what before it was.

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

We'll hear no more.—
Pursue him to his house, and pluck him thence;
Lest his infection, being of catching⁸ nature,
Spread further.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

One word more, one word.
This tiger-footed rage, when it shall find
The harm of unscann'd swiftness,⁹ will, too late,
Tie leaden pounds¹⁰ to's heels. Proceed by process;¹¹

¹ dam: animal mother. ² Mortal: fatal. ³ worthy: deserves.
⁴ suffer it: allow it to happen. ⁶ brand: mark of disgrace.
⁵ clean kam: quite wrong (awry). ⁷ Merely: completely.
⁸ catching: a contagious. ⁹ unscann'd swiftness: thoughtless haste.
¹⁰ pounds: weights. ¹¹ by process: by legal means.

Lest parties¹—as he is beloved—break out,
And sack great Rome with Romans.

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

If it were so,—

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

What do ye talk? ²

Have we not had a taste of his obedience?

Our ædiles smote? ourselves resisted? Come,—

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

Consider this:—he has been bred i' the wars
Since he could draw a sword, and is ill school'd
In bolted ³ language; meal and bran⁴ together
He throws without distinction. Give me leave,
I'll go to him, and undertake to bring him
Where he shall answer, by a lawful form,—
In peace,—to his utmost peril.

FIRST SENATOR.

Noble tribunes,

It is the humane way: the other course
Will prove too bloody; and the end of it
Unknown to the beginning.⁵

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

Noble Menenius,

Be you, then, as the people's officer.—
Masters, lay down your weapons.

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

Go not home.

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

Meet on the market-place. We'll attend you there:
Where, if you bring not Marcius, we'll proceed
In our first way.⁶

¹ parties: factions.

² talk: say.

³ bolted: fine (as flour is finely sifted).

⁴ meal and bran: the good and the bad.

⁵ the end . . . beginning: no one knows how it will end.

⁶ In our first way: as we planned at first.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

I'll bring him to you.—

[*to the SENATORS*] Let me desire your company; he must come,
Or what is worst will follow.

FIRST SENATOR.

Pray you, let's to him. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.

A room in CORIOLANUS' house.

Enter CORIOLANUS and PATRICIANS.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

Let them pull all about mine ears; present me
Death on the wheel or at wild horses' heels;¹
Or pile ten hills on the Tarpeian rock,
That the precipitation might down stretch
Below the beam² of sight; yet will I still
Be thus to them.

FIRST PATRICIAN.

You do the nobler.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

I muse³ my mother
Does not approve me further,⁴ who was wont
To call them woollen vassals,⁵ things created
To buy and sell with groats;⁶ to show bare heads
In congregations, to yawn, be still, and wonder,
When one but of my ordinance⁷ stood up
To speak of peace or war.

Enter VOLUMNIA.

I talk of you:

¹Death . . . heels: broken on the wheel, or torn to pieces by wild horses (Elizabethan forms of torture). ²beam: range.

³muse: wonder. ⁴approve me further: show more approval of my actions. ⁵woollen vassals: woolen-clad (coarsely dressed) slaves. ⁶groats: coins worth about fourpence. ⁷ordinance: rank.

Why did you wish me milder? would you have me
False to my nature? Rather say, I play
The man I am.

VOLUMNIA.

O, sir, sir, sir,
I would have had you put your power well on,
Before you had worn it out.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

Let go.

VOLUMNIA.

You might have been enough the man you are,
With striving less to be so: lesser had been
The thwartings of your disposition, if
You had not show'd them how ye were disposed
Ere they lackt power to cross you.¹

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

Let them hang.

VOLUMNIA.

Ay, and burn too.

Enter MENENIUS with the SENATORS.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

Come, come, you have been too rough, something too rough;
You must return and mend it.²

FIRST SENATOR.

There's no remedy;
Unless, by not so doing, our good city
Cleave in the midst,³ and perish.

VOLUMNIA.

Pray, be counsell'd:

I have a heart as little apt⁴ as yours,
But yet a brain that leads my use of anger
To better vantage.⁵

¹ Ere they lackt power to cross you: before they lost the power to oppose you.

² mend it: mend your fences.

³ Cleave in the midst: break in two.

⁴ as little apt: as unbending (toward the plebeians).

⁵ vantage: advantage; profit.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

Well said, noble woman!
Before he should thus stoop to the herd, but that
The violent fit¹ o'the time craves it as physic
For the whole state, I would put mine armour on,
Which I can scarcely bear.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

What must I do?

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

Return to the tribunes.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

Well, what then? what then?

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

Repent what you have spoke.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

For them?—I cannot do it to the gods;
Must I, then, do't to them?

VOLUMNIA.

You are too absolute;²

Though therein you can never be too noble,
But when extremities speak.³ I have heard you say,
Honour and policy,⁴ like unsever'd⁵ friends,
I'the war do grow together: grant that, and tell me,
In peace what each of them by th'other lose,
That they combine not there.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

Tush, tush!

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

A good demand.

VOLUMNIA.

If it be honour in your wars to seem
The same you are not,—which, for your best ends,

¹ fit: riots.

² absolute: unyielding; positive.

³ extremities speak: emergencies demand.

⁴ policy: craft.

⁵ unsever'd: inseparable.

You adopt your policy,—how is it less or worse,
That it shall hold companionship in peace
With honour, as in war; since that to both
It stands in like request? ¹

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

Why force you this?

VOLUMNIA.

Because that now it lies you on² to speak
To the people; not by your own instruction,
Nor by the matter which your heart prompts you,
But with such words that are but rote³ in
Your tongue, though but bastards,⁴ and syllables
Of no allowance to your bosom's truth.
Now, this no more dishonours you at all
Than to take in a town with gentle words,
Which else would put you to your fortune, and
The hazard of much blood.
I would dissemble with⁵ my nature, where
My fortunes and my friends at stake required
I should do so in honour: I am,⁶ in this,
Your wife, your son, these senators, the nobles;
And you will rather show our general louts⁷
How you can frown than spend a fawn⁸ upon 'em,
For the inheritance⁹ of their loves, and safeguard
Of what that want¹⁰ might ruin.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

Noble lady!—

Come, go with us; speak fair: you may salve¹¹ so,
Not what is dangerous present, but the loss
Of what is past.

VOLUMNIA.

I prithee now, my son,
Go to them with this bonnet in thy hand;

¹ stands in like request: is equally needed. ² lies you on: lies on you; is your duty. ³ rote: learned by rote (memory). ⁴ bastards: falsehoods. ⁵ dissemble with: disguise. ⁶ I am: I speak for. ⁷ our general louts: the rabble. ⁸ fawn: act of fawning. ⁹ inheritance: possession. ¹⁰ want: lack. ¹¹ salve: heal.

And thus far having stretcht it,—here be with them,—
 Thy knee bussing¹ the stones,—for in such business
 Action is eloquence, and the eyes of th'ignorant
 More learned than the ears,—waving thy head,²
 Which often,³ thus, correcting thy stout heart,
 Now humble as the ripest mulberry
 That will not hold⁴ the handling,—or say to them,
 Thou art their soldier, and, being bred in broils,⁵
 Hast not the soft way which, thou dost confess,
 Were fit for thee to use, as they to claim,
 In asking their good loves; but thou wilt frame⁶
 Thyself, forsooth, hereafter theirs, so far
 As thou hast power and person.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

This but done,

Even as she speaks it, why, their hearts were yours;
 For they have pardons, being askt, as free
 As words to little purpose.

VOLUMNIA.

Prithee now,

Go, and be ruled: although I know thou hadst rather
 Follow thine enemy in a fiery gulf⁷
 Than flatter him in a bower.—Here is Cominius.

Enter COMINIUS.

COMINIUS.

I have been i'the market-place; and, sir, 'tis fit
 You make strong party, or defend yourself
 By calmness or by absence: all's in anger.

¹ bussing: kissing.

² waving thy head: bowing your head.

³ Which often: which you must do frequently. ⁴ hold: stand; endure.

⁵ broils: wars.

⁶ frame: make.

⁷ gulf: whirlpool.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

Only fair speech.

COMINIUS.

I think 'twill serve, if he
Can thereto frame his spirit.

VOLUMNIA.

He must, and will.—
Prithee now, say you will, and go about it.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

Must I go show them my unbarb'd sconce? ¹ must I
With my base tongue give to my noble heart
A lie that it must bear? Well, I will do't:
Yet, were there but this single plot² to lose,
This mould of Marcius, they to dust should grind it,
And throw't against the wind.—To the market-place!—
You have put me now to such a part,³ which never
I shall discharge to the life.

COMINIUS.

Come, come, we'll prompt you.

VOLUMNIA.

I prithee now, sweet son,—as thou has said
My praises made thee first a soldier, so,
To have my praise for this, perform a part
Thou hast not done before.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

Well, I must do't:

Away, my disposition,⁴ and possess me
Some harlot's⁵ spirit! my throat of war be turn'd,
Which quired with my drum,⁶ into a pipe
Small as an eunuch, or the virgin voice
That babies lulls asleep! the smiles of knaves

¹ unbarb'd sconce: unarmed head.

² plot: plot of earth—human body.

³ a part: an actor's role.

⁴ disposition: natural disposition or inclination.

⁵ harlot's: base creature's.

⁶ quired with my drum: formerly harmonized with my drum.

Tent¹ in my cheeks; and schoolboys' tears take up
 The glasses of my sight! ² a beggar's tongue
 Make motion through my lips; and my arm'd knees,
 Who³ bow'd but in my stirrup, bend like his
 That hath received an alms! ⁴—I will not do't;
 Lest I surcease⁵ to honour mine own truth,
 And by my body's action teach my mind
 A most inherent baseness.

VOLUMNIA.

At thy choice, then:

To beg of thee, it is my more dishonour
 Than thou of them. Come all to ruin: let
 Thy mother rather feel thy pride than fear
 Thy dangerous stoutness;⁶ for I mock at death
 With as big heart as thou. Do as thou list.⁷
 Thy valiantness was mine, thou suck'dst it from me;
 But owe⁸ thy pride thyself.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

Pray, be content:

Mother, I am going to the market-place;
 Chide me no more. I'll mountebank their loves,⁹
 Cog¹⁰ their hearts from them, and come home beloved
 Of all the trades¹¹ in Rome. Look, I am going:
 Commend me to my wife. I'll return consul;
 Or never trust to what my tongue can do
 The way of flattery further.

VOLUMNIA.

Do your will.

[Exit.

COMINIUS.

Away! the tribunes do attend you: arm yourself ¹²

¹ Tent: encamp.

² The glasses of my sight: my eyeballs.

³ Who: which. ⁴ an alms: a gift of charity. ⁵ surcease: cease.

⁶ stoutness: obstinacy. ⁷ list: wish. ⁸ owe: own. ⁹ mountebank their loves: win their devotion by cheap tricks. ¹⁰ Cog:

cheat; trick. ¹¹ trades: tradesmen. ¹² arm yourself: prepare yourself.

To answer mildly; for they are prepared
With accusations, as I hear, more strong
Than are upon you yet.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

The word is 'mildly:'—pray you, let us go:
Let them accuse me by invention,¹ I
Will answer in mine honour.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

Ay, but mildly.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

Well, mildly be it, then,—mildly!

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.

The same. The Forum.

Enter SICINIUS and BRUTUS.

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

In this point charge him home,²—that he affects
Tyrannical power: if he evade us there,
Enforce him with³ his envy to the people;
And that the spoil got on⁴ the Antiates
Was ne'er distributed.

Enter an AEDILE.

What, will he come?

AEDILE.

He's coming.

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

How accompanied?

AEDILE.

With old Menenius, and those senators
That always favour'd him.

¹ Let . . . invention: let them invent charges against me.

² charge him home: press your charges against him vigorously.

³ Enforce him with: put emphasis on.

⁴ got on: won from; at the expense of.

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

Have you a catalogue
Of all the voices that we have procured,
Set down by the poll? ¹

AEDILE.

I have; 'tis ready.

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

Have you collected them by tribes? ²

AEDILE.

I have.

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

Assemble presently³ the people hither:
And when they hear me say, 'It shall be so
I'th'right and strength o'th'commons,' be it either
For death, for fine, or banishment, then let them,
If I say fine, cry 'Fine,'—if death, cry 'Death;
Insisting on the old prerogative⁴
And power i'the truth o'the cause.

AEDILE.

I shall inform them.

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

And when such time they have begun to cry,
Let them not cease, but with a din confused⁵
Enforce the present execution
Of what we chance to sentence.

AEDILE.

Very well.

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

Make them be strong, and ready for this hint,⁶
When we shall hap⁷ to give't them.

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

Go about it.—[Exit AEDILE.]

Put him to choler⁸ straight: he hath been used

¹ by the poll: name by name. ² tribes: divisions of the population in ancient Rome. ³ presently: at once. ⁴ prerogative: sovereign right. ⁵ a din confused: loud confusion. ⁶ hint: opportunity. ⁷ hap: happen. ⁸ Put him to choler: make him angry.

Ever to conquer, and to have his worth
Of contradiction:¹ being once chafed,² he cannot
Be rein'd again to temperance; then he speaks
What's in his heart; and that is there which looks
With us to break his neck.³

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

Well, here he comes.

Enter CORIOLANUS, MENENIUS, COMINIUS, *with* SENATORS *and*
PATRICIANS.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

Calmly, I do beseech you.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

Ay, as an ostler,⁴ that for the poorest piece
Will bear the knave by the volume,⁵—The honour'd gods
Keep Rome in safety, and the chairs of justice
Supplied with worthy men! plant love among's!
Throng our large temples with the shows of peace,
And not our streets with war!

FIRST SENATOR.

Amen, amen.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

A noble wish.

Enter the AEDILE, *with* CITIZENS.

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

Draw near, ye people.

AEDILE.

List to your tribunes; audience! peace, I say!

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

First, hear me speak.

BOTH TRIBUNES.

Well, say.—Peace, ho!

¹ to have his worth/Of contradiction: to indulge his love of being contradictory to the fullest extent. ² chafed: irritated; rubbed raw. ³ to break his neck: to hang him. ⁴ ostler: a groom who looks after horses at an inn. ⁵ for . . . volume: for a very small amount of money, will tolerate being called a knave without end.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

Shall I be charged no further than this present?

Must all determine¹ here?

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

I do demand

If you submit you² to the people's voices,

Allow³ their officers, and are content

To suffer lawful censure for such faults

As shall be proved upon you?

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

I am content.

* MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

Lo, citizens, he says he is content:

The warlike service he has done consider; think

Upon the wounds his body bears, which show

Like graves i'the holy churchyard.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

Scratches with briers,

Scars to move laughter only.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

Consider further,

That when he speaks not like a citizen,

You find him like a soldier: do not take

His rougher accents for malicious sounds,

But, at I say, such as become a soldier,

Rather than envy you.⁴

COMINIUS.

Well, well, no more.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

What is the matter,

That being passed for consul with full voice,

I am so dishonour'd, that the very hour⁵

You take it off again?

¹ determine: be settled.

² you: yourself.

³ Allow: acknowledge.

⁴ envy you: express hatred for you.

⁵ the very hour: within the hour.

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

Answer to us.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

Say, then: 'tis true, I ought so.

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

We charge you, that you have contrived to take
From Rome all season'd office,¹ and to wind
Yourself into a power tyrannical;
For which you are a traitor to the people.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

How! traitor!

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

Nay, temperately; your promise.²

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

The fires i'the lowest hell fold-in³ the people!
Call me their traitor!—Thou injurious⁴ tribune!
Within⁵ thine eyes sat twenty thousand deaths,
In thy hands clutcht as many millions, in
Thy lying tongue both numbers, I would say
'Thou liest' unto thee with a voice as free
As I do pray⁶ the gods.

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

Mark you this, people?

CITIZENS.

To the rock, to the rock with him!

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

Peace!

We need not put new matter to his charge:
What you have seen him do, and heard him speak,
Beating⁷ your officers, cursing yourselves,
Opposing laws with strokes,⁸ and here defying
Those whose great power must try him; even this,

¹ season'd office: long-established duties. ² your promise: re-
member your promise. ³ fold-in: enclose. ⁴ injurious: insulting.
⁵ Within: although within. ⁶ pray: pray to. ⁷ Beating: attack-
ing. ⁸ strokes: blows.

So criminal, and in such capital kind,¹
Deserves th'extremest death.

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

But since he hath
Served well for Rome,—

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

What do you prate of service?

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

I talk of that, that know it.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

You?

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

Is this the promise that you made your mother?

COMINIUS.

Know, I pray you,—

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

I'll know no further:

Let them pronounce the steep Tarpeian death,
Vagabond exile, flaying, pent to linger
But with a grain a day,²—I would not buy
Their mercy at the price of one fair word;
Nor check my courage for what they can give,
To have't with saying 'Good morrow.'

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

For that³ he has,

As much as in him lies, from time to time
Envied against⁴ the people, seeking means
To pluck away their power; as now at last
Given hostile strokes, and that not in the presence
Of dreaded justice, but on the ministers
That do distribute it;—in the name o'the people,
And in the power of us the tribunes, we,
Even from this instant, banish him our city;

¹ in such capital kind: so deserving of death.

² pent . . . day: imprisoned, to starve slowly to death.

³ For that: because.

⁴ Envied against: shown malice for.

In peril of precipitation
From off the rock Tarpeian, never more
To enter our Rome gates: i'the people's name,
I say it shall be so.

CITIZENS.

It shall be so,
It shall be so; let him away: he's banisht,
And it shall be so.

COMINIUS.

Hear me, my masters and my common friends,—

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

He's sentenced; no more hearing.

COMINIUS.

Let me speak:

I have been consul, and can show for Rome
Her enemies' marks upon me. I do love
My country's good with a respect more tender,
More holy, and profound, than mine own life,
My dear wife's estimate,¹ her womb's increase,
And treasure of my loins; then if I would
Speak that,—

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

We know your drift:²—speak what?

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

There's no more to be said, but he is banisht,
As enemy to the people and his country:
It shall be so.

CITIZENS.

It shall be so, it shall be so.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

You common cry³ of curs! whose breath I hate
As reek o'the rotten fens,⁴ whose loves I prize
As the dead carcasses of unburied men

¹ estimate: reputation; honor.

² drift: purpose.

³ cry: pack (of hounds).

⁴ rotten fens: disease-breeding swamps.

That do corrupt my air,—I banish you;
 And here remain with your uncertainty! ¹
 Let every feeble rumour shake your hearts!
 Your enemies, with nodding of their plumes,²
 Fan you into despair! Have the power still
 To banish your defenders; till at length
 Your ignorance, which finds not till it feels,
 Making not reservation of yourselves,
 Still your own foes, deliver you, as most
 Abated ³ captives, to some nation
 That won you without blows! Despising,
 For you, the city, thus I turn my back:
 There is a world elsewhere.

[*Exeunt* CORIOLANUS, COMINIUS, MENENIUS, SENATORS, *and*
 PATRICIANS.]

AEDILE.

The people's enemy is gone, is gone!

CITIZENS.

Our enemy is banisht! he is gone!

Hoo! hoo! [They all shout and throw up their caps.]

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

Go, see him out at gates, and follow him,
 As he hath follow'd you, with all despite;⁴
 Give him deserved vexation.⁵ Let a guard
 Attend us through the city.

CITIZENS.

Come, come, let's see him out at gates; come:—
 The gods preserve our noble tribunes!—come.

[*Exeunt.*]

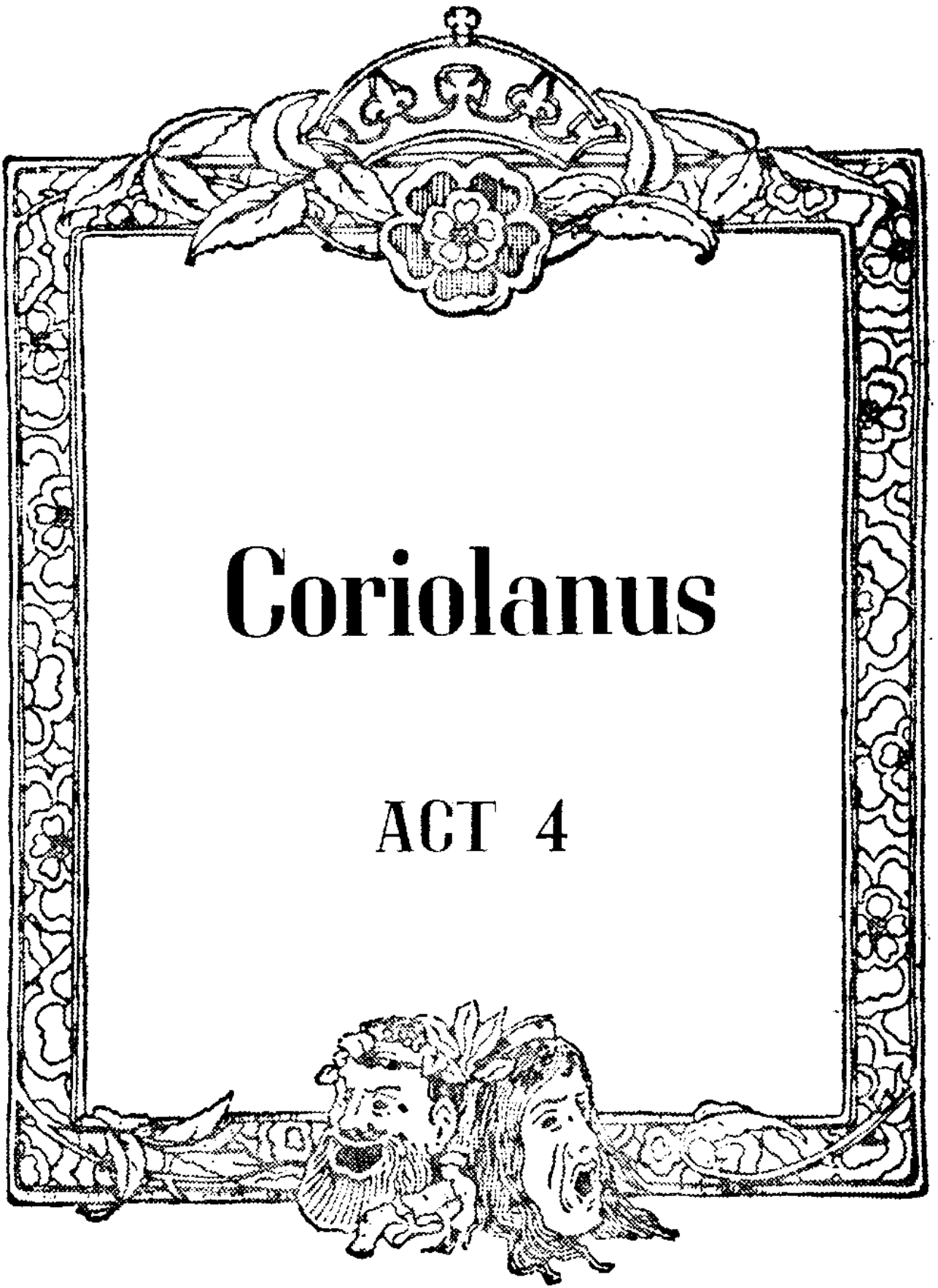
¹ And here remain . . . uncertainty: and sentence you to stay here in your own state of confusion.

² plumes: i.e., the plumes on their war helmets.

³ Abated: humiliated.

⁴ despite: spite.

⁵ vexation: torment.



Coriolanus

ACT 4

ACT IV

AT ONE of the gates of Rome Coriolanus says goodbye to his relatives and friends. When Volumnia later upbraids the tribunes, they try to dissemble and then rudely dismiss her as mad. Meanwhile, Coriolanus goes in disguise to Antium where Aufidius is living, and offers his old enemy his assistance against Rome. In Rome the tribunes are expressing their satisfaction at the turn of events when they are told that the Volscians have invaded Roman territory. They at first refuse to believe the news and are dismayed when Cominius persuades them that not only is it true but Coriolanus is with the Volscians. The citizens now say they were wrong to banish him. In the Volscian camp Aufidius finds Coriolanus' proud bearing and his popularity with the soldiers insufferable and he determines to dispose of him as soon as Rome is taken.

ACT IV. SCENE I.

Rome. Before a gate of the city.

Enter CORIOLANUS, VOLUMNIA, VIRGILIA, MENENIUS, COMINIUS;
with the young NOBILITY *of Rome.*

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

Come, leave your tears; a brief farewell:—the beast
With many heads¹ butts me away.—Nay, mother,
Where is your ancient² courage? you were used
To say extremity³ was the trier of spirits;
That common chances common men could bear;
That, when the sea was calm, all boats alike
Show'd mastership in floating; fortune's blows,
When most struck home, being gentle wounded, craves
A noble cunning:⁴ you were used to load me
With precepts that would make invincible
The heart that conn'd them.⁵

VIRGILIA.

O heavens! O heavens!

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

Nay, I prithee, woman,—

VOLUMNIA.

Now the red pestilence⁶ strike all trades in Rome,
And occupations perish!

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

What, what, what!

I shall be loved when I am lackt.⁷ Nay, mother,
Resume that spirit, when you were wont to say,
If you had been the wife of Hercules,
Six of his labours you'd have done, and saved
Your husband so much sweat.—Cominius,
Droop not; adieu.—Farewell, my wife,—my mother:

¹ the beast . . . heads: the common people; the rabble. ² ancient: former. ³ extremity: misfortune. ⁴ fortune's blows . . . cunning: when fortune strikes its hardest blows, it requires a noble upbringing to endure them without wincing. ⁵ conn'd them: learned them by heart. ⁶ the red pestilence: a form of the plague. ⁷ lackt: missed; needed.

I'll do well yet.—Thou old and true Menenius,
 Thy tears are salter¹ than a younger man's,
 And venomous to thine eyes.—My sometime² general,
 I have seen thee stern, and thou hast oft beheld
 Heart-hard'ning spectacles; tell these sad women,
 'Tis fond³ to wail inevitable strokes,⁴
 As 'tis to laugh at 'em.—My mother, you wot⁵ well
 My hazards still have been your solace: and
 Believe't not lightly,⁶—though I go alone,
 Like to a lonely dragon, that his fen
 Makes fear'd and talkt of more than seen,—your son
 Will or exceed the common, or be caught
 With cautelous baits and practice.⁷

VOLUMNIA.

My first son,
 Whither wilt thou go? Take good Cominius
 With thee awhile: determine on some course,
 More than a wild exposure to each chance
 That starts i'the way before thee.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

O the gods!

COMINIUS.

I'll follow thee a month, devise with thee
 Where thou shalt rest, that thou mayst hear of us,
 And we of thee: so, if the time thrust forth
 A cause for thy repeal,⁸ we shall not send
 O'er the vast world to seek a single man;
 And lose advantage,⁹ which doth ever cool
 I'the absence of the needer.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

Fare ye well:

¹ salter: saltier; more bitter. ² sometime: former. ³ fond: as foolish. ⁴ strokes: strokes of Fortune. ⁵ wot: know. ⁶ Believe't not lightly: be sure of this. ⁷ your son . . . practice: your son, unless he is caught by snares and treachery, will show that he is more than an ordinary man; *cautelous*: crafty; *practice*: treason. ⁸ repeal: recall from banishment. ⁹ advantage: opportunity.

Thou hast years upon thee; and thou art too full
Of the wars' surfeits, to go rove with one
That's yet unbruised: bring me but out at gate.—¹
Come, my sweet wife, my dearest mother, and
My friends of noble touch;² when I am forth,³
Bid me farewell, and smile. I pray you, come.
While I remain above the ground, you shall
Hear from me still: and never of me aught
But what is like me formerly.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

That's worthily
As any ear can hear.—Come, let's not weep.—
If I could shake off but one seven years
From these old arms and legs, by the good gods,
I'd with thee every foot.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

Give me thy hand:—

Come.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.

The same. A street near the gate.

Enter the two TRIBUNES, SICINIUS, BRUTUS, with the AEDILE.

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

Bid them all home; he's gone, and we'll no further.—
The nobility are vexed, whom we see have sided ⁴
In his behalf.

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

Now we have shown our power,
Let us seem humbler after it is done
Than when it was a-doing.

¹ bring me . . . gate: escort me only through the gate.

² of noble touch: of proved nobility.

³ when I am forth: when I am ready to go.

⁴ sided: taken sides.

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

Bid them home:

Say their great enemy is gone, and they
Stand in their ancient strength.

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

Dismiss them home.

[Exit AEDILE.]

Here comes his mother.

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

Let's not meet her.

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

Why?

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

They say she's mad.

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

They have ta'en note of us: keep on your way.

Enter VOLUMNIA, VIRGILIA, and MENENIUS.

VOLUMNIA.

O, y'are well met: the hoarded plague o'the gods¹
Requite your love!

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

Peace, peace; be not so loud.

VOLUMNIA.

If that I could for weeping, you should hear,—
Nay, and you shall hear some.—[to BRUTUS]

Will you be gone?

VIRGILIA [to SICINIUS VELUTUS].

You shall stay too: I would I had the power
To say so to my husband.

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

Are you mankind? ²

VOLUMNIA.

Ay, fool; is that a shame?—Note but this fool.—

¹ the hoarded plague o'the gods: every plague stored up by the gods for special punishment.

² mankind: a mannish woman.

Was not a man my father? Hadst thou foxship¹
To banish him that struck more blows for Rome
Than thou hast spoken words?—

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

O blessed heavens!

VOLUMNIA.

More noble blows than ever thou wise words;
And for Rome's good.—I'll tell thee what;—yet go:—
Nay, but thou shalt stay too:—I would my son
Were in Arabia,² and thy tribe³ before him,
His good sword in his hand.

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

What then?

VIRGILIA.

What then!

He'd make an end of thy posterity.⁴

VOLUMNIA.

Bastards and all.—

Good man, the wounds that he does bear for Rome!

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

Come, come, peace.

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

I would he had continued to his country
As he began, and not unknit himself
The noble knot he made.⁵

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

I would he had.

VOLUMNIA.

'I would he had!' 'Twas you incensed the rabble;—
Rats, that can judge as fitly of his worth
As I can of those mysteries which heaven
Will not have earth to know.

¹ foxship: the low cunning of a fox.

² Arabia: the Arabian desert.

³ thy tribe: your family.

⁴ posterity: descendants.

⁵ The noble knot he made: that is, his bond of faithful service to Rome.

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

Pray, let us go.

VOLUMNIA.

Now, pray, sir, get you gone:
You have done a brave¹ deed. Ere you go, hear this:—
As far as doth the Capitol exceed
The meanest house in Rome, so far my son,—
This lady's husband here, this, do you see,—
Whom you have banisht, does exceed you all.

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

Well, well, we'll leave you.

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

Why stay we to be baited²

With one that wants her wits?³

VOLUMNIA.

Take my prayers with you.—

[*Exeunt* TRIBUNES.]

I would the gods had nothing else to do
But to confirm my curses! Could I meet 'em
But once a-day, it would unclog⁴ my heart
Of what lies heavy to't.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

You have told them home;⁵

And, by my troth, you have cause. You'll sup with me?

VOLUMNIA.

Anger's my meat; I sup upon myself,
And so shall starve with feeding.—Come, let's go:
Leave this faint puling,⁶ and lament as I do,
In anger, Juno-like.⁷ Come, come, come.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

Fie, fie, fie!

[*Exeunt.*]

¹ brave: noble (ironic). ² baited: taunted. ³ wants her wits: is mad. ⁴ unclog: remove the burden from. ⁵ told them home: told them the truth. ⁶ faint puling: weak whimpering. ⁷ Juno-like: like a goddess's great anger.

SCENE III.

A highway between Rome and Antium.

Enter a ROMAN and a VOLSCE, meeting.

ROMAN.

I know you well, sir, and you know me: your name, I think, is Adrian.

VOLSCE.

It is so, sir: truly, I have forgot you.

ROMAN.

I am a Roman; and my services are, as you are, against 'em: know you me yet?

VOLSCE.

Nicanor? no?

ROMAN.

The same, sir.

VOLSCE.

You had more beard when I last saw you; but your favour¹ is well approved by your tongue.² What's the news in Rome? I have a note from the Volscian state, to find you out³ there: you have well saved me a day's journey.

ROMAN.

There hath been in Rome strange insurrections; the people against the senators, patricians, and nobles.

VOLSCE.

Hath been! is it ended, then? Our state thinks not so: they are in a most warlike preparation, and hope to come upon them in the heat of their division.

¹ favour: face.

² tongue: speech.

³ find you out: seek you.

ROMAN.

The main blaze of it is past, but a small thing would make it flame again; for the nobles receive¹ so to heart the banishment of that worthy Coriolanus, that they are in a ripe aptness² to take all power from the people, and to pluck from them their tribunes for ever. This lies glowing,³ I can tell you, and is almost mature for the violent breaking out.

VOLSCE.

Coriolanus banisht!

ROMAN.

Banisht, sir.

VOLSCE.

You will be welcome with this intelligence,⁴ Nicanor.

ROMAN.

The day serves well for them now. I have heard it said, the fittest time to corrupt a man's wife is when she's faln out with her husband. Your noble Tullus Aufidius will appear well in these wars, his great opposer, Coriolanus, being now in no request of⁵ his country.

VOLSCE.

He cannot choose.⁶ I am most fortunate, thus accidentally to encounter you: you have ended my business, and I will merrily accompany you home.

ROMAN.

I shall, between this and supper, tell you most strange things from Rome; all tending to the good of their adversaries. Have you an army ready, say you?

¹ receive: take.

² a ripe aptness: full readiness.

³ glowing: i.e., as a spark glows.

⁴ intelligence: news.

⁵ no request of: no demand by.

⁶ He cannot choose: he cannot choose but appear well.

VOLSCE.

A most royal one; the centurions and their charges, distinctly billeted,¹ already in the entertainment,² and to be on foot at an hour's warning.

ROMAN.

I am joyful to hear of their readiness, and am the man, I think, that shall set them in present³ action. So, sir, heartily well met, and most glad of your company.

VOLSCE.

You take my part from me, sir; I have the most cause to be glad of yours.

ROMAN.

Well, let us go together.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE IV.

Antium. Before AUFIDIUS' house.

Enter CORIOLANUS in mean apparel, disguised and muffled.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

A goodly city is this Antium.—City,
'Tis I that made thy widows: many an heir
Of these fair edifices 'fore my wars⁴
Have I heard groan and drop: then know me not;
Lest that thy wives with spits,⁵ and boys with stones,
In puny battle slay me.

Enter a CITIZEN.

Save you,⁶ sir.

CITIZEN.

And you.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

Direct me, if it be your will,
Where great Aufidius lies:⁷ is he in Antium?

¹ distinctly billeted: individually assigned. ² in the entertainment: engaged to serve; on the payroll. ³ present: immediate. ⁴ 'fore my wars: confronting me in battle. ⁵ spits: slender iron rods on which meat was roasted. ⁶ Save you: God preserve you. ⁷ lies: lodges.

CITIZEN.

He is, and feasts the nobles of the state
At his house this night.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

Which is his house, beseech you?

CITIZEN.

This, here, before you.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

Thank you, sir: farewell.

[Exit CITIZEN.]

O world, thy slippery turns! ¹ Friends now fast sworn,
Whose double bosoms seems to wear one heart,
Whose hours, whose bed, whose meal, and exercise,
Are still together, who twin,² as 'twere, in love
Unseparable, shall within this hour,
On a dissension of a doit,³ break out
To bitterest enmity: so, fellest⁴ foes,
Whose passions and whose plots have broke their sleep
To take the one the other, by some chance,
Some trick⁵ not worth an egg, shall grow dear friends
And interjoin their issues.⁶ So with me:
My birth-place hate I, and my love's upon
This enemy town.—I'll enter: if he slay me,
He does fair justice; if he give me way,⁷
I'll do his country service.

[Exit.]

¹ slippery turns: fickle turns of Fortune's wheel. ² twin: are joined together, like twins. ³ a dissension of a doit: a quarrel over nothing (a doit was worth half a farthing). ⁴ fellest: fiercest. ⁵ trick: trifle. ⁶ interjoin their issues: make common cause. ⁷ way: admittance.

SCENE V.

The same. A hall in AUFIDIUS' house.

Music plays. Enter a SERVING-MAN.

FIRST SERVING-MAN.

Wine, wine, wine!—What service is here!
I think our fellows are asleep.

[Exit.

Enter another SERVING-MAN.

SECOND SERVING-MAN.

Where's COTUS? my master calls for him.—
COTUS!

[Exit.

Enter CORIOLANUS.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

A goodly house: the feast smells well; but I
Appear not like a guest.

Enter the first SERVING-MAN.

FIRST SERVING-MAN.

What would you have, friend? whence are you?
Here's no place for you: pray, go to the door.

[Exit.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

I have deserved no better entertainment¹
In being Coriolanus.

Enter second SERVING-MAN.

SECOND SERVING-MAN.

Whence are you, sir?—Has the porter² his eyes in his head,
that he gives entrance to such companions?³—Pray, get you
out.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

Away!

SECOND SERVING-MAN.

'Away!' get you away.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

Now th'art troublesome.

¹ entertainment: reception.

² porter: keeper of the gate or gatehouse.

³ companions: low fellows.

SECOND SERVING-MAN.

Are you so brave?¹ I'll have you talkt with anon.²

Enter a third SERVING-MAN. The first meets him.

THIRD SERVING-MAN.

What fellow's this?

SECOND SERVING-MAN.

A strange one as ever I lookt on: I cannot get him out o'the house: prithee, call my master to him.

THIRD SERVING-MAN.

What have you to do here, fellow? Pray you avoid³ the house.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

Let me but stand; I will not hurt your hearth.

THIRD SERVING-MAN.

What are you?

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

A gentleman.

THIRD SERVING-MAN.

A marvellous poor one.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

True, so I am.

THIRD SERVING-MAN.

Pray you, poor gentleman, take up some other station;⁴ here's no place for you; pray you, avoid: come.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

Follow your function,⁵ go, and batten on cold bits.⁶

[Pushes him away from him.]

THIRD SERVING-MAN.

What, you will not?—Prithee, tell my master what a strange guest he has here.

SECOND SERVING-MAN.

And I shall.

[Exit.]

¹ brave: insolent. ² anon: at once. ³ avoid: get out of. ⁴ station: standing place. ⁵ Follow your function: go about your proper business. ⁶ batten . . . cold bits: fatten on cold scraps from the table.

THIRD SERVING-MAN.

Where dwell'st thou?

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

Under the canopy.¹

THIRD SERVING-MAN.

Under the canopy!

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

Ay.

THIRD SERVING-MAN.

Where's that?

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

I'th' city of kites² and crows.

THIRD SERVING-MAN.

I'th' city of kites and crows!—What an ass it is!—

Then thou dwell'st with daws³ too?

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

No, I serve not thy master.

THIRD SERVING-MAN.

How, sir! do you meddle with my master?

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

Ay; 'tis an honest service than to meddle with thy mistress:
thou pratest, and pratest; serve with thy trencher,⁴ hence!
[Beats him away.]

Enter AUFIDIUS with the second SERVING-MAN.

TULLUS AUFIDIUS.

Where is this fellow?

SECOND SERVING-MAN.

Here, sir: I'd⁵ have beaten him like a dog, but for disturbing the lords within.
[Retires.]

TULLUS AUFIDIUS.

Whence comest thou? what wouldst thou? thy name?
Why speak'st not? speak, man: what's thy name?

¹ canopy: sky; the heavens.

² kites: small birds of the hawk family.

³ daws: jackdaws.

⁴ trencher: large wooden platter.

⁵ I'd: I would.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

If, Tullus,
[Unmuffling.]

Not yet thou know'st me, and, seeing me, dost not
Think me for the man I am, necessity
Commands me name myself.

TULLUS AUFIDIUS.

What is thy name?

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

A name unmusical to the Volscians' ears,
And harsh in sound to thine.

TULLUS AUFIDIUS.

Say, what's thy name?

Thou hast a grim appearance, and thy face
Bears a command in't; though thy tackle's¹ torn,
Thou show'st² a noble vessel: what's thy name?

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

Prepare thy brow to frown:—know'st thou me yet?

TULLUS AUFIDIUS.

I know thee not:—thy name?

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

My name is Caius Marcius, who hath done
To thee particularly and to all the Volscies
Great hurt and mischief; thereto witness may
My surname, Coriolanus: the painful service,
The extreme dangers, and the drops of blood
Shed for my thankless country, are requited
But³ with that surname; a good memory.⁴
And witness of the malice and displeasure
Which thou shouldst bear me: only that name remains;
The cruelty and envy of the people,
Permitted by our dastard nobles, who

¹ tackle's: rigging's (of a ship).

² show'st: appearest; appear to be.

³ But: only.

⁴ memory: reminder; memento.

Have all forsook me, hath devour'd the rest;
And suffer'd me by the voice of slaves to be
Whoopt¹ out of Rome. Now, this extremity
Hath brought me to thy hearth; not out of hope—
Mistake me not—to save my life; for if
I had fear'd death, of all the men i'the world
I would have 'voided² thee; but in mere spite,
To be full quit of³ those my banishers,
Stand I before thee here. Then if thou hast
A heart of wreak⁴ in thee, that wilt revenge
Thine own particular wrongs, and stop those maims
Of shame⁵ seen through thy country, speed thee straight,
And make my misery serve thy turn: so use it,
That my revengeful services may prove
As benefits to thee; for I will fight
Against my canker'd⁶ country with the spleen⁷
Of all the under fiends.⁸ But if so be
Thou darest not this, and that to prove more fortunes⁹
Th'art tired, then, in a word,¹⁰ I also am
Longer to live most weary, and present
My throat to thee and to thy ancient malice;
Which not to cut would show thee but a fool,
Since I have ever follow'd thee with hate,
Drawn tuns¹¹ of blood out of thy country's breast,
And cannot live but to thy shame,¹² unless
It be to do thee service.

TULLUS AUFIDIUS.

O Marcius, Marcius!

Each word thou hast spoke hath weeded from my heart

¹ Whoopt: pursued by cries of derision. ² 'voided: avoided. ³ full quit of: fully avenged on. ⁴ heart of wreak: vengeful heart. ⁵ maims/Of shame: shameful injuries. ⁶ canker'd: hate-eaten. ⁷ spleen: anger; fury. ⁸ under fiends: the devils of the underworld. ⁹ prove more fortunes: risk again the fortunes of war. ¹⁰ in a word: on my word. ¹¹ tuns: large barrels. ¹² but to thy shame: except to shame you (for letting me live).

A root of ancient envy.¹ If Jupiter
 Should from yond cloud speak divine things,
 And say ' 'Tis true,' I'd not believe them more
 Than thee, all-noble Marcius.—Let me twine
 Mine arms about that body, where against
 My grained ash² an hundred times hath broke,
 And scarr'd the moon with splinters: here I clip³
 The anvil⁴ of my sword; and do contest
 As hotly and as nobly with thy love
 As ever in ambitious strength I did
 Contend against thy valour. Know thou first
 I loved the maid I married; never man
 Sigh'd truer breath; but that I see thee here,
 Thou noble thing! more dances my rapt⁵ heart
 Than when I first my wedded mistress saw
 Bestride my threshold. Why, thou Mars!⁶ I tell thee,
 We have a power on foot; and I had purpose
 Once more to hew thy target⁷ from thy brawn,⁸
 Or lose mine arm for't: thou hast beat me out
 Twelve several⁹ times, and I have nightly since
 Dreamt of encounters 'twixt thyself and me;
 We have been down together in my sleep,
 Unbuckling helms,¹⁰ fisting each other's throat,
 And waked half dead with nothing. Worthy Marcius,
 Had we no quarrel else to Rome,¹¹ but that
 Thou art thence banisht, we would muster all
 From twelve to seventy; and, pouring war
 Into the bowels of ungrateful Rome,
 Like a bold flood o'er-bear. O, come, go in,
 And take our friendly senators by the hands;
 Who now are here taking their leaves of me,
 Who am prepared against your territories,

¹ ancient envy: old hatred. ² grained ash: spear shaft of hard-grained (tough) ash. ³ clip: embrace. ⁴ anvil: i.e., Coriolanus.
⁵ rapt: enraptured. ⁶ Mars: god of war. ⁷ target: shield. ⁸ brawn: brawny arm. ⁹ several: separate. ¹⁰ helms: helmets. ¹¹ no quarrel else to Rome: no other quarrel with Rome.

Though not for Rome itself.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

You bless me, gods!

TULLUS AUFIDIUS.

Therefore, most absolute¹ sir, if thou wilt have
The leading of thine own revenges, take
The one half of my commission;² and set down—
As best thou art experienced, since thou know'st
Thy country's strength and weakness—thine own ways;
Whether to knock against the gates of Rome,
Or rudely visit them in parts remote,
To fright them, ere destroy. But come in:
Let me commend³ thee first to those that shall
Say yea to thy desires. A thousand welcomes!
And more a friend than e'er an enemy;
Yet, Marcius, that was much. Your hand: most, welcome!
[*Exeunt* CORIOLANUS and AUFIDIUS.—*The two SERVING-MEN*
come forward.

FIRST SERVING-MAN.

Here's a strange alteration!

SECOND SERVING-MAN.

By my hand, I had thought to have stricken him with a cudgel; and yet my mind gave me⁴ his clothes made a false report of him.

FIRST SERVING-MAN.

What an arm he has! he turn'd me about with his finger and his thumb as one would set up a top.⁵

SECOND SERVING-MAN.

Nay, I knew by his face that there was something in him: he had, sir, a kind of face, methought,—I cannot tell how to term it.

¹ absolute: perfect.

² commission: command.

³ commend: introduce.

⁴ gave me: misgave me.

⁵ set up a top: set a top to spinning.

FIRST SERVING-MAN.

He had so; looking as it were—Would I were hang'd, but I thought there was more in him than I could think.

SECOND SERVING-MAN.

So did I, I'll be sworn: he is simply the rarest man i'the world.

FIRST SERVING-MAN.

I think he is: but a greater soldier than he you wot on.¹

SECOND SERVING-MAN.

Who, my master?

FIRST SERVING-MAN.

Nay, it's no matter for that.

SECOND SERVING-MAN.

Worth six on him.

FIRST SERVING-MAN.

Nay, not so neither: but I take him to be the greater soldier.

SECOND SERVING-MAN.

Faith, look you, one cannot tell how to say that: for the defence of a town our general is excellent.

FIRST SERVING-MAN.

Ay, and for an assault too.

Enter the third SERVING-MAN.

THIRD SERVING-MAN.

O slaves, I can tell you news,—news, you rascals!

FIRST *and* SECOND SERVING-MEN.

What, what, what? let's partake.²

THIRD SERVING-MAN.

I would not be a Roman, of all nations; I had as lief³ be a condemn'd man.

¹ wot on: know of.

² let's partake: let us share your news.

³ lief: soon.

FIRST *and* SECOND SERVING-MEN.

Wherefore? wherefore?

THIRD SERVING-MAN.

Why, here's he that was wont to thwack¹ our general,—
Caius Marcius.

FIRST SERVING-MAN.

Why do you say 'thwack our general'?

THIRD SERVING-MAN.

I do not say 'thwack our general;' but he was always good
enough for him.

SECOND SERVING-MAN.

Come, we are fellows and friends: he was ever too hard for
him; I have heard him say so himself.

FIRST SERVING-MAN.

He was too hard for him directly, to say the troth on't: before
Corioli he scotcht² him and notcht him like a carbonado.³

SECOND SERVING-MAN.

An he had been cannibally given, he might have broil'd and
eaten him too.

FIRST SERVING-MAN.

But, more of thy news?

THIRD SERVING-MAN.

Why, he is so made on here⁴ within as if he were son and heir
to Mars; set at upper end o'the table; no question askt him by
any of the senators, but they stand bald⁵ before him: our
general himself makes a mistress of him; sanctifies himself
with's hand,⁶ and turns up the white o'the eye to his dis-
course. But the bottom of the news is, our general is cut i'the
middle, and but one half of what he was yesterday; for the
other has half, by the entreaty and grant⁷ of the whole table.
He'll go, he says, and sowl⁸ the porter of Rome gates by the

¹ thwack: beat; wallop. ² scotcht: scored; slashed. ³ carbonado:
steak scored for broiling. ⁴ so made on here: made so much of
here. ⁵ bald: bareheaded. ⁶ sanctifies . . . hand: touches his
hand as if it were holy. ⁷ entreaty and grant: request and disposal.
⁸ sow: pull out; drag.

ears: he will mow all down before him, and leave his passage poll'd.¹

SECOND SERVING-MAN.

And he's as like to do't as any man I can imagine.

THIRD SERVING-MAN.

Do't! he will do't; for, look you,² sir, he has as many friends as enemies: which friends, sir, as it were, durst not, look you, sir, show themselves, as we term it, his friends whilst he's in directitude.³

FIRST SERVING-MAN.

Directitude! what's that?

THIRD SERVING-MAN.

But when they shall see, sir, his crest up again, and the man in blood,⁴ they will out of their burrows, like conies⁵ after rain, and revel all with him.

FIRST SERVING-MAN.

But when goes this forward?

THIRD SERVING-MAN.

To-morrow; to-day; presently; you shall have the drum struck up this afternoon: 'tis, as it were, a parcel⁶ of their feast, and to be executed ere they wipe their lips.

SECOND SERVING-MAN.

Why, then we shall have a stirring world again. This peace is nothing,⁷ but to rust iron, increase tailors, and breed ballad-makers.

FIRST SERVING-MAN.

Let me have war, say I; it exceeds peace as far as day does night; it's spritely, waking, audible, and full of vent.⁸ Peace is a very apoplexy, lethargy; mull'd,⁹ deaf, sleepy, insensible; a getter of more bastard children than war's a destroyer of men.

¹ poll'd: cleared. ² look you: mind you. ³ directitude: the servant's word for "discreditute." ⁴ in blood: in good condition; in fine fettle. ⁵ conies: rabbits. ⁶ parcel: part. ⁷ nothing: good for nothing. ⁸ vent: excited talk. ⁹ mull'd: warmed into drowsiness.

SECOND SERVING-MAN.

'Tis so: and as war, in some sort,¹ may be said to be a ravisher, so it cannot be denied but peace is a great maker of cuckolds.²

FIRST SERVING-MAN.

Ay, and it makes men hate one another.

THIRD SERVING-MAN.

Reason; because they then less need one another. The wars for my money. I hope to see Romans as cheap as Volscians.— They are rising,³ they are rising.

ALL THREE.

In, in, in, in!

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE VI.

Rome. A public place.

Enter the two TRIBUNES, SICINIUS and BRUTUS.

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

We hear not of him, neither need we fear him;
His remedies⁴ are tame i'the present peace
And quietness of the people, which before
Were in wild hurry. Here do we make his friends
Blush that the world goes well; who rather had,
Though they themselves did suffer by't, behold
Dissentious numbers pest'ring streets,⁵ than see
Our tradesmen singing in their shops, and going
About their functions friendly.

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

We stood to't⁶ in good time.—Is this Menenius?

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

'Tis he, 'tis he: O, he is grown most kind
Of late. Hail, sir!

¹ in some sort: in a way.

² cuckolds: deceived husbands.

³ rising: getting up from the table.

⁴ remedies: chances of reinstatement.

⁵ pest'ring streets: crowding the streets.

⁶ We stood to't: we banished him.

Enter MENENIUS.

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

Hail, sir!

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

Hail to you both!

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

Your Coriolanus, sir, is not much mist¹

But with² his friends: the commonwealth doth stand:

And so would do, were he more angry at it.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

All's well; and might have been much better, if

He could have temporized.³

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

Where is he, hear you?

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

Nay, I hear nothing: his mother and his wife

Hear nothing from him.

Enter three or four CITIZENS.

CITIZENS.

The gods preserve you both!

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

God-den, our neighbours.

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

God-den to you all, god-den to you all.

FIRST CITIZEN.

Ourselves, our wives, and children, on our knees,

Are bound to pray for you both.

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

Live, and thrive!

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

Farewell, kind neighbours: we wisht Coriolanus

Had loved you as we did.

¹ mist: missed.

² But with: except by.

³ temporized: compromised.

CITIZENS.

Now the gods keep you!

BOTH TRIBUNES.

Farewell, farewell.

[*Exeunt* CITIZENS.]

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

This is a happier and more comely time
Than when these fellows ran about the streets
Crying confusion.

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

Caius Marcius was
A worthy officer i'the war; but insolent,
O'ercome with pride, ambitious past all thinking,
Self-loving,—

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

And affecting¹ one sole throne,
Without assistance.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

I think not so.

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

We should by this,² to all our lamentation,
If he had gone forth consul, found it so.

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

The gods have well prevented it, and Rome
Sits safe and still without him.

Enter an AEDILE.

AEDILE.

Worthy tribunes,
There is a slave, whom we have put in prison,
Reports the Volsces with two several powers³
Are enter'd in the Roman territories,
And with the deepest malice of the war
Destroy what lies before 'em.

¹ *affecting*: desiring; loving.

² *by this*: by this time.

³ *several powers*: separate armies.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

'Tis Aufidius,
Who, hearing of our Marcius' banishment,
Thrusts forth his horns again into the world;
Which were inshell'd ¹ when Marcius stood for Rome,²
And durst not once peep out.

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

Come, what talk you

Of Marcius?

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

Go see this rumourer whipt.—It cannot be
The Volsces dare break with us.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

Cannot be!

We have record that very well it can;
And three examples of the like hath been
Within my age.³ But reason⁴ with the fellow,
Before you punish him, where he heard this;
Lest you shall chance to whip your information,
And beat the messenger who bids beware
Of what is to be dreaded.

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

Tell not me:

I know this cannot be.

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

Not possible.

Enter a MESSENGER.

MESSENGER.

The nobles in great earnestness are going
All to the senate-house: some news is come
That turns their countenances.⁵

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

'Tis this slave;—

¹ inshell'd: inside his shell (as a snail's horns).

² stood for Rome: was Rome's champion.

³ age: lifetime.

⁴ reason: talk.

⁵ turns their countenances: turns them pale.

Go whip him 'fore¹ the people's eyes:— his raising;
Nothing but his report.

MESSENGER.

Yes, worthy sir,
The slave's report is seconded;² and more,
More fearful, is deliver'd.³

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

What more fearful?

MESSENGER.

It is spoke freely out of many mouths—
How probable I do not know—that Marcius,
Join'd with Aufidius, leads a power 'gainst Rome,
And vows revenge as spacious as between
The young'st and oldest thing.⁴

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

This is most likely!

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

Raised⁵ only, that the weaker sort may wish
Good Marcius home again.

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

The very trick on't.⁶

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

This is unlikely:
He and Aufidius can no more atone⁷
Than violentest contrariety.⁸

Enter a second MESSENGER.

SECOND MESSENGER.

You are sent for to the senate:
A fearful army, led by Caius Marcius
Associated with Aufidius, rages
Upon our territories; and have already
O'erborne their way,⁹ consumed with fire, and took
What lay before them.

¹ 'fore: before; in front of. ² seconded: supported. ³ deliver'd: reported.
⁴ revenge . . . thing: that he will spare no living thing.
⁵ Raised: rumored. ⁶ on't: of it. ⁷ atone: become reconciled.
⁸ violentest contrariety: the most violently opposed adversaries.
⁹ O'erborne their way: swept away everything in their path.

Enter COMINIUS.

COMINIUS.

O, you have made good work!

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

What news? what news?

COMINIUS.

You have help¹ to ravish your own daughters, and

To melt the city leads² upon your pates;³

To see your wives dishonour'd to your noses,⁴—

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

What's the news? what's the news?

COMINIUS.

Your temples burned in their cement; and

Your franchises,⁵ whereon you stood,⁶ confined

Into an auger's bore.⁷

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

Pray now, your news?—

You have made fair work, I fear me.—Pray, your news?—

If Marcius should be join'd with Volscians,—

COMINIUS.

If!

He is their god: he leads them like a thing

Made by some other deity than nature,

That shapes man better; and they follow him,

Against us brats, with no less confidence

Than boys pursuing summer butterflies,

Or butchers killing flies.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

You have made good work,

You and your apron-men;⁸ you that stood so much

Upon the voice of occupation⁹ and

The breath of garlic-eaters!

¹ help: helped. ² city leads: city roofs. ³ pates: heads. ⁴ to your noses: beneath your noses. ⁵ franchises: public rights. ⁶ whereon you stood: on which you insisted. ⁷ auger's bore: a small hole made by an auger. ⁸ apron-men: artisans, who wore aprons.

⁹ voice of occupation: the votes or opinions of the workingmen.

COMINIUS.

He will shake
Your Rome about your ears.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

As Hercules
Did shake down mellow fruit.¹—You have made fair work!

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

But is this true, sir?

COMINIUS.

Ay; and you'll look pale
Before you find it other. All the regions
Do smilingly² revolt; and who resist
Are mockt for valiant ignorance,³
And perish constant⁴ fools. Who is't can blame him?
Your enemies and his find something in him.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

We are all undone,⁵ unless
The noble man have mercy.

COMINIUS.

Who shall ask it?
The tribunes cannot do't for shame; the people
Deserve such pity of him as the wolf
Does of the shepherds: for his best friends, if they
Should say, 'Be good to Rome,' they charged him even
As those should do that had deserved his hate,
And therein show'd like⁶ enemies.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

'Tis true:
If he were putting to my house the brand⁷
That should consume it, I have not the face

¹ Hercules . . . fruit: an allusion to the golden apples of the Hesperides gathered by Hercules. ² smilingly: gladly. ³ valiant ignorance: being foolishly brave. ⁴ constant: loyal. ⁵ undone: ruined. ⁶ show'd like: appeared as. ⁷ brand: firebrand; torch.

To say, 'Beseech you, cease.'—You have made fair hands,¹
 You and your crafts! ² you have crafted fair!

COMINIUS.

You have brought

A trembling upon Rome, such as was never
 So incapable of help.

BOTH TRIBUNES.

Say not, we brought it.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

How! Was it we? we loved him; but, like beasts
 And cowardly nobles, gave way unto your clusters,³
 Who did hoot him out o'the city.

COMINIUS.

But I fear

They'll roar him in again. Tullus Aufidius,
 The second name of men,⁴ obeys his points⁵
 As if he were his officer: ⁶—desperation
 Is all the policy, strength, and defence,
 That Rome can make against them.

Enter a troop of CITIZENS.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

Here come the clusters.—

And is Aufidius with him?—You are they
 That made the air unwholesome, when you cast
 Your stinking greasy caps in hooting at
 Coriolanus' exile. Now he's coming;
 And not a hair upon a soldier's head
 Which will not prove a whip: as many coxcombs⁷
 As you threw caps up will he tumble down,
 And pay you for your voices. 'Tis no matter;
 If he could burn us all into one coal,⁸
 We have deserved it.

¹ made fair hands: done a fine job (ironic). ² crafts: tradesmen.
³ clusters: crowds; mobs. ⁴ The second name of men: the most
 outstanding general after Coriolanus. ⁵ points: orders. ⁶ officer:
 subordinate. ⁷ coxcombs: fools. ⁸ coal: cinder.

CITIZENS.

Faith, we hear fearful news.

FIRST CITIZEN.

For mine own part,
When I said, banish him, I said, 'twas pity.¹

SECOND CITIZEN.

And so did I.

THIRD CITIZEN.

And so did I; and, to say the truth, so did very many of us;
that we did, we did for the best; and though we willingly
consented to his banishment, yet it was against our will.

COMINIUS.

Yare goodly things, you voices!

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

You have made
Good work, you and your cry! ²—Shall's to the Capitol?

COMINIUS.

O, ay, what else?

[*Exeunt* COMINIUS and MENENIUS.]

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

Go, masters, get you home; be not dismay'd:
These are a side that would be glad to have
This true which they so seem to fear. Go home,
And show no sign of fear.

FIRST CITIZEN.

The gods be good to us!—Come, masters, let's home. I ever
said we were i'the wrong when we banisht him.

SECOND CITIZEN.

So did we all. But, come, let's home.

[*Exeunt* CITIZENS.]

¹ 'twas pity: it was a pity.

² cry: pack (of hounds).

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

I do not like this news.

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

Nor I.

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

Let's to the Capitol.—Would half my wealth
Would buy this for a liel

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

Pray, let us go.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE VII.

A camp, at a small distance from Rome.

Enter AUFIDIUS with his LIEUTENANT.

TULLUS AUFIDIUS.

Do they still fly to the Roman?

LIEUTENANT.

I do not know what witchcraft's in him, but
Your soldiers use him as the grace 'fore meat,
Their talk at table, and their thanks at end;
And you are darken'd ¹ in this action, sir,
Even by your own.²

TULLUS AUFIDIUS.

I cannot help it now,
Unless, by using means,³ I lame the foot
Of our design.⁴ He bears himself more proudlier,
Even to my person, than I thought he would
When first I did embrace him: yet his nature
In that's no changeling;⁵ and I must excuse
What cannot be amended.⁶

LIEUTENANT.

Yet I wish, sir,—

¹ darken'd: overshadowed.

² your own: your own soldiers.

³ means: treachery. ⁴ I lame . . . design: cripple our own plan.

⁵ In that's no changeling: in that respect, his nature has not changed. ⁶ amended: corrected.

I mean for your particular,¹—you had not
Join'd in commission² with him; but either
Had borne the action of³ yourself, or else
To him had left it solely.

TULLUS AUFIDIUS.

I understand thee well; and be thou sure,
When he shall come to his account, he knows not
What I can urge against him. Although it seems,
And so he thinks, and is no less apparent
To the vulgar⁴ eye, that he bears all things fairly,
And shows good husbandry⁵ for the Volscian state,
Fights dragon-like, and does achieve⁶ as soon
As draw his sword; yet he hath left undone
That which shall break his neck or hazard mine,
Whene'er we come to our account.

LIEUTENANT.

Sir, I beseech you, think you he'll carry Rome?

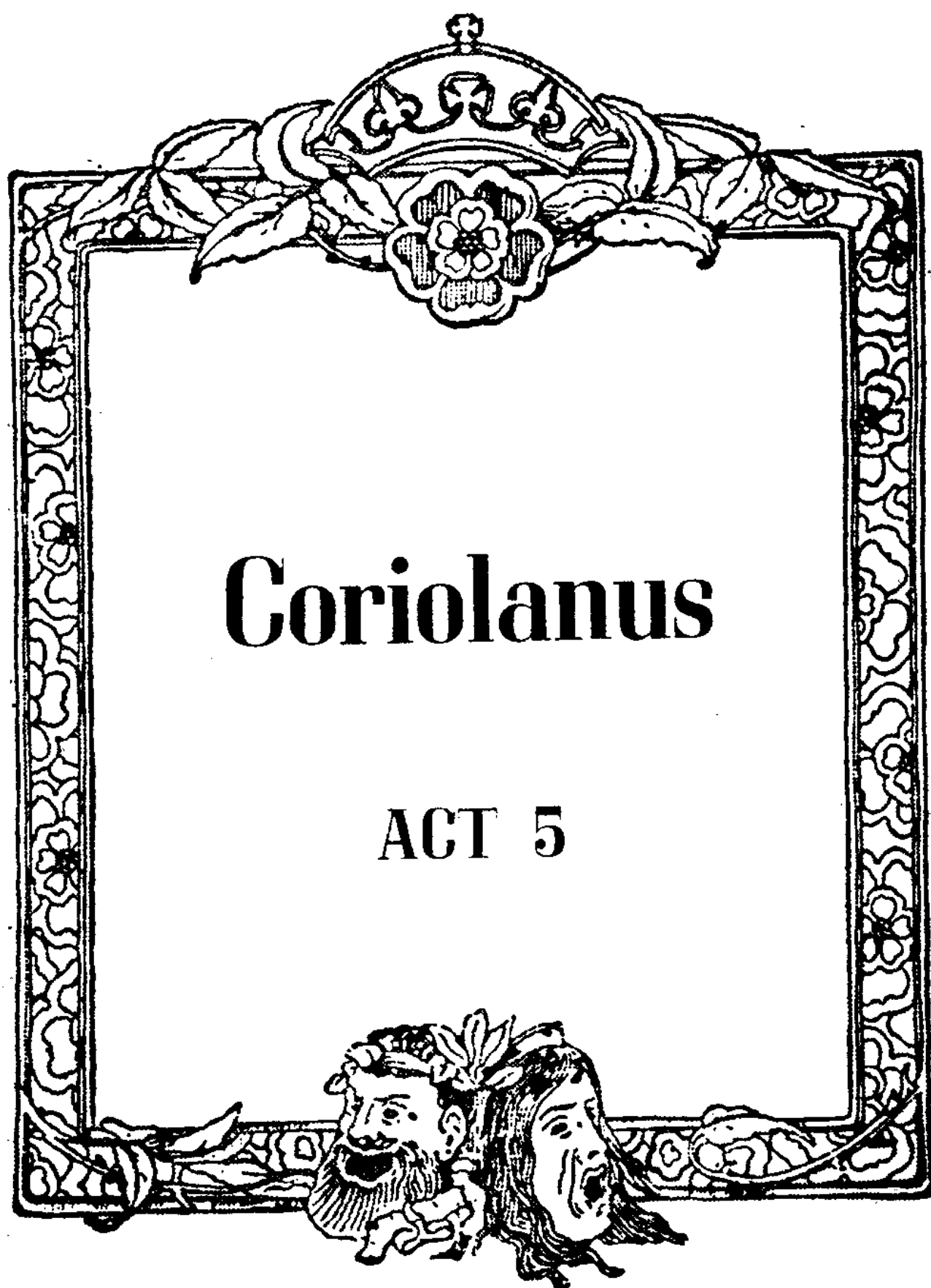
TULLUS AUFIDIUS.

All places yield to him ere he sits down;
And the nobility of Rome are his:
The senators and patricians love him too:
The tribunes are no soldiers; and their people
Will be as rash in the repeal, as hasty⁷
To expel him thence. I think he'll be to Rome
As is the osprey⁸ to the fish, who takes it
By sovereignty of nature.⁹ First he was
A noble servant to them; but he could not
Carry his honours even:¹⁰ whether 'twas pride,
Which out of ¹¹ daily fortune ever taints¹²
The happy man; whether defect of judgement,
To fail in the disposing of those chances
Which he was lord of; or whether nature,
Not to be other than one thing, not moving

¹ for your particular: for your own personal interests. ² in commission: forces. ³ of: by. ⁴ vulgar: public. ⁵ husbandry: management. ⁶ achieve: conquer; win. ⁷ as hasty: as they were hasty. ⁸ osprey: a large hawk which preys on fish. ⁹ sovereignty of nature: natural superiority. ¹⁰ even: in a moderate sort of way. ¹¹ out of: in the course of. ¹² taints: infects.

From the casque to the cushion,¹ but commanding peace
Even with the same austerity and garb²
As he controll'd the war; but one of these—
As he hath spices³ of them all, not all,
For I dare so far free⁴ him—made him fear'd,
So hated, and so banisht: but he has a merit,
To choke it in the utterance.⁵ So our virtues
Lie in the interpretation of the time;
And power, unto itself most commendable,
Hath not a tomb so evident as a chair
T'extol what it hath done.
One fire drives out one fire; one nail, one nail;
Rights by rights falter, strengths by strengths do fail.
Come, let's away. When, Caius, Rome is thine,
Thou'rt poor'st of all; then shortly art thou mine. [Exeunt.

¹ not moving . . . cushion: not being able to adapt himself from the life of a warrior to that of a peaceful citizen. ² austerity and garb: austere fashion. ³ spices: touches; flavors. ⁴ free: absolve. ⁵ he has . . . utterance: his merit should have stopped any thought of carrying out his banishment.



Coriolanus

ACT 5

ACT V

COMINIUS reports that he has tried to intercede with Coriolanus to no avail. Menenius goes and meets with no more success. But when Coriolanus' wife, mother, and son entreat him, Coriolanus gives way. While Menenius is telling Sicinius that Coriolanus will show no mercy and that the tribunes are to blame, the news comes of Coriolanus' capitulation and all Rome rejoices. But at Corioli Aufidius decides to use Coriolanus' change of mind to his own advantage. When Coriolanus enters the city accompanied by admiring Volscians in order to turn over the spoils and announce a peace agreement, Aufidius renounces him as a traitor. Conspirators, who have been hired by Aufidius, kill Coriolanus. Aufidius publicly defends their action, although he admits to being "struck with sorrow." He declares that Coriolanus shall have "a noble memory."

ACT V. SCENE I.

Rome. A public place.

Enter MENENIUS, COMINIUS, SICINIUS, BRUTUS, and others.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

No, I'll not go: you hear what he hath said
Which¹ was sometime² his general; who loved him
In a most dear particular.³ He call'd me father:
But what o'that? Go, you that banisht him;
A mile before his tent fall down, and knee
The way⁴ into his mercy: nay, if he coy'd⁵
To hear Cominius speak, I'll keep⁶ at home.

COMINIUS.

He would not seem to know me.

¹ Which: who.

² sometime: at one time.

³ In . . . particular: in a deep and personal way.

⁴ knee/The way: crawl on your knees.

⁵ coy'd: played coy; disdained.

⁶ keep: stay.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

Do you hear?

COMINIUS.

Yet one time he did call me by my name:
I urged ¹ our old acquaintance, and the drops
That we have bled together. Coriolanus
He would not answer to: forbade all names;
He was a kind of nothing, titleless,
Till he had forged himself a name o' ² the fire
Of burning Rome.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

Why, so,—you have made good work!
A pair of tribunes that have rackt³ for Rome
To make coals⁴ cheap,—a noble memory! ⁵

COMINIUS.

I minded ⁶ him how royal 'twas to pardon
When it was least expected: he replied,
It was a base petition of a state
To one whom they had punisht.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

Very well:

Could he say less?

COMINIUS.

I offer'd ⁷ to awaken his regard
For's private friends: his answer to me was,
He could not stay to pick them in a pile
Of noisome musty chaff: he said 'twas folly,
For one poor grain or two, to leave unburnt,
And still to nose⁸ the offence.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

For one poor grain or twol
I am one of those; his mother, wife, his child,

¹ urged: brought up. ² o': out of. ³ rackt: striven desperately.
⁴ coals: cinders. ⁵ noble memory: a worthy thing for which to be
remembered (ironic). ⁶ minded: reminded. ⁷ offer'd: attempted.
⁸ nose: smell.

And this brave¹ fellow too, we are the grains;
You are the musty chaff; and you are smelt
Above the moon: we must be burnt for you.

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

Nay, pray, be patient: if you refuse your aid
In this so never-needed² help, yet do not
Upbraid's with our distress. But, sure, if you
Would be your country's pleader, your good tongue,
More than the instant army we can make,³
Might stop our countryman.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

No, I'll not meddle.

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

Pray you, go to him.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

What should I do?

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

Only make trial what your love can do
For Rome, towards Marcius.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

Well, and say that Marcius

Return me, as Cominius is return'd,
Unheard; what then?
But as a discontented friend, grief-shot⁴
With his unkindness? say't be so?

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

Yet your good will

Must have that thanks from Rome, after⁵ the measure
As you intended well.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

I'll undertake't:

¹ brave: noble.

² so never-needed: never so much needed as now.

³ the instant army . . . make: the army which we can raise at once.

⁴ grief-shot: grief-stricken.

⁵ after: according to.

I think he'll hear me. Yet, to bite his lip
And hum at good Cominius, much unhearts me.
He was not taken well,¹ he had not dined:
The veins unfill'd, our blood is cold, and then
We pout upon the morning,² are unapt
To give or to forgive; but when we've stuf
These pipes³ and these conveyances of our blood
With wine and feeding, we have suppler souls
Than in our priest-like fasts: therefore I'll watch him
Till he be dieted to my request,⁴
And then I'll set upon him.

JUNIUS BRUTUS.

You know the very road into his kindness,
And cannot lose your way.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

Good faith, I'll prove him,⁵
Speed how it will: you shall ere long have knowledge
Of my success.

[Exit.]

COMINIUS.

He'll never hear him.

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

Not?

COMINIUS.

I tell you, he does sit in gold,⁶ his eye
Red as 'twould burn Rome; and his injury
The gaoler to his pity.⁷ I kneel'd before him;
'Twas very faintly he said 'Rise;' dismiss me
Thus, with his speechless hand: what he would do,
He sent in writing after me; what he would not,
Bound with an oath to yield no fresh conditions:
So that all hope is vain,

¹He was not taken well: that is, Marcius was approached at a bad moment. ²We pout . . . morning: we are peevish in the morning. ³pipes: veins. ⁴dieted to my request: well fed, and in a good mood to grant a favor. ⁵prove him: test him. ⁶in gold: on a golden throne. ⁷his injury . . . pity: his anger over his banishment blocking his compassion.

Unless in's noble mother and his wife;¹
 Who, as I hear, mean to solicit him
 For mercy to his country. Therefore let's hence,
 And with our fair entreaties haste them on.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.

*The Volscian camp before Rome.
 The SENTINELS at their stations.*

Enter MENENIUS to the WATCH or GUARD.

FIRST SENTINEL.

Stay: whence are you?

SECOND SENTINEL.

Stand, and go back.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

You guard like men; 'tis well: but, by your leave,
 I am an officer of state, and come
 To speak with Coriolanus.

FIRST SENTINEL.

From whence?

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

From Rome.

FIRST SENTINEL.

You may not pass, you must return: our general
 Will no more hear from thence.

SECOND SENTINEL.

You'll see your Rome embraced with fire, before
 You'll speak with Coriolanus.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

Good my friends,
 If you have heard your general talk of Rome,
 And of his friends there, it is lots to blanks²

¹ Unless . . . wife: unless it is through the intercession of his noble mother and his wife.

² lots to blanks: lots were the total number of tickets in a lottery, blanks the majority that carried no prize; Menenius, therefore, means that there is more than an equal chance.

My name hath toucht your éars: it is Menenius.

FIRST SENTINEL.

Be it so; go back: the virtue¹ of your name
Is not here passable.²

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

I tell thee, fellow,
Thy general is my lover: I have been
The book³ of his good acts, whence men have read
His fame unparallel'd, haply amplified;⁴
For I have ever verified⁵ my friends—
Of whom he's chief—with all the size⁶ that verity
Would without lapsing suffer:⁷ nay, sometimes,
Like to a bowl⁸ upon a subtle⁹ ground,
I have tumbled past the throw; and in his praise
Have almost stamp't the leasing:¹⁰ therefore, fellow,
I must have leave to pass.

FIRST SENTINEL.

Faith, sir, if you had told as many lies in his behalf as you
have utter'd words in your own, you should not pass here; no,
though it were as virtuous to lie as to live chastely. There-
fore, go back.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

Prithee, fellow, remember my name is Menenius, always fac-
tionary on¹¹ the party of your general.

SECOND SENTINEL.

Howsoever you have been his liar, as you say you have, I am
one that, telling true under him,¹² must say you cannot pass.
Therefore, go back.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

Has he dined, canst thou tell? for I would not speak with him
till after dinner.

FIRST SENTINEL.

You are a Roman, are you?

¹ virtue: power. ² passable: valid. ³ book: recorder. ⁴ haply
amplified: perhaps exaggerated. ⁵ verified: borne witness to.
⁶ size: blowing up. ⁷ that verity . . . suffer: that truth would
bear without lapsing into falsehood. ⁸ bowl: bowling ball. ⁹ sub-
tle; tricky. ¹⁰ stamp't the leasing: given the lie (leasing) to the
stamp of truth. ¹¹ factionary on: partial to. ¹² telling . . . him:
speaking the truth in his service.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

I am, as thy general is.

FIRST SENTINEL.

Then you should hate Rome, as he does. Can you, when you have pusht out your gates the very defender of them, and, in a violent popular ignorance,¹ given your enemy your shield, think to front² his revenges with the easy groans of old women, the virginal palms of your daughters, or with the palsied intercession of such a decay'd dotant³ as you seem to be? Can you think to blow out the intended fire your city is ready to flame in with such weak breath as this? No, you are deceived; therefore, back to Rome, and prepare for your execution: you are condemn'd, our general has sworn you out of ⁴reprieve and pardon.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

Sirrah, if thy captain knew I were here, he would use me with estimation.⁵

SECOND SENTINEL.

Come, my captain knows you not.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

I mean, thy general.

FIRST SENTINEL.

My general cares not for you. Back, I say, go; lest I let forth your half-pint of blood;⁶—back,—that's the utmost of your having—⁷back.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

Nay, but, fellow, fellow,—

Enter CORIOLANUS and AUFIDIUS.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

What's the matter?

¹ a violent . . . ignorance: the folly of mob violence. ² front: confront; oppose. ³ dotant: dotard; old man. ⁴ out of: beyond the hope of. ⁵ estimation: esteem; respect. ⁶ your half-pint of blood: a contemptuous remark. ⁷ utmost of your having: extent of your entry.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

Now, you companion, I'll say an errand for you:¹ you shall know now that I am in estimation; you shall perceive that a Jack guardant² cannot office me³ from my son Coriolanus: guess, but by my entertainment with⁴ him, if thou stand'st not i'the state of hanging, or of some death more long in spectatorship, and crueller in suffering; behold now presently, and swoond⁵ for what's to come upon thee.—[to CORIOLANUS] The glorious gods sit in hourly synod⁶ about thy particular⁷ prosperity, and love thee no worse than thy old father Menenius does! O my son, my son! thou art preparing fire for us; look thee, here's water to quench it. I was hardly⁸ moved to come to thee; but being assured none but myself could move thee, I have been blown out of our gates with sighs; and conjure thee to pardon Rome, and thy petitionary countrymen. The good gods assuage thy wrath, and turn the dregs of it upon this varlet⁹ here,—this, who, like a block,¹⁰ hath denied my access to thee.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

Away!

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

How! away!

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

Wife, mother, child, I know not. My affairs
Are servanted to¹¹ others: though I owe
My revenge properly,¹² my remission lies
In Volscian breasts. That we have been familiar,¹³
Ingrate forgetfulness shall prison, rather
Than pity note how much. Therefore, be gone.
Mine ears against your suits are stronger than

¹ say an errand for you: tell him about you. ² a Jack guardant: a knave of a sentry. ³ office me: detain me in this officious manner. ⁴ entertainment with: reception by. ⁵ swoond: swoon. ⁶ synod: assembly; conference. ⁷ particular: personal. ⁸ hardly: with difficulty. ⁹ varlet: servant; menial. ¹⁰ block: block of wood; block-head. ¹¹ servanted to: at the service of. ¹² properly: personally. ¹³ familiar: friends.

Your gates against my force. Yet, for¹ I loved thee,
Take this along; I writ it for thy sake, [Gives a letter.
And would have sent it. Another word, Menenius,
I will not hear thee speak.—This man, Aufidius,
Was my beloved in Rome: yet thou behold'st!

TULLUS AUFIDIUS.

You keep a constant temper.²

[Exeunt CORIOLANUS and AUFIDIUS.

FIRST SENTINEL.

Now, sir, is your name Menenius?

SECOND SENTINEL.

'Tis a spell, you see, of much power: you know the way home
again.

FIRST SENTINEL.

Do you hear how we are shent³ for keeping your greatness
back?

SECOND SENTINEL.

What cause, do you think, I have to swoond?

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

I neither care for the world nor your general: for such things
as you, I can scarce think there's any, y'are so slight. He that
hath a will to die by himself fears it not from another: let
your general do his worst. For you, be that you are,⁴ long;⁵
and your misery increase with your age! I say to you, as I
was said to, Away! [Exit.

FIRST SENTINEL.

A noble fellow, I warrant him.

SECOND SENTINEL.

The worthy fellow is our general: he's the rock, the oak not
to be wind-shaken. [Exeunt.

¹ for: because.

² a constant temper: an unyielding frame of mind.

³ shent: scolded; rebuked.

⁴ that you are: i.e., wretched.

⁵ long: for a long time.

SCENE III.

The tent of CORIOLANUS.

Enter CORIOLANUS, AUFIDIUS, and others.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

We will before the walls of Rome to-morrow
Set down our host.¹—My partner in this action,
You must report to the Volscian lords, how plainly²
I have borne this business.

TULLUS AUFIDIUS.

Only their ends
You have respected; stopt your ears against
The general suit³ of Rome; never admitted
A private whisper, no, not with such friends
That thought them sure of you.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

This last old man,
Whom with a crackt⁴ heart I have sent to Rome,
Loved me above the measure of a father;
Nay, godded⁵ me, indeed. Their latest refuge⁶
Was to send him; for whose old love I have,
Though I show'd sourly to him, once more offer'd
The first conditions, which they did refuse,
And cannot now accept; to grace⁷ him only
That thought he could do more, a very little
I have yielded to: fresh embassies and suits,
Nor from the state nor private friends, hereafter
Will I lend ear to.—Ha! what shout is this? [*Shout within.*]
Shall I be tempted to infringe my vow
In the same time 'tis made? I will not.

¹ host: army. ² plainly: honestly. ³ suit: petition. ⁴ crackt:
broken. ⁵ godded: idolized. ⁶ latest refuge: last resort. ⁷ grace:
honor.

Enter, in mourning habits, VIRGILIA, VOLUMNIA, leading YOUNG MARCIUS, VALERIA, with ATTENDANTS.

My wife comes foremost; then the honour'd mould
Wherein this trunk was framed,¹ and in her hand ²
The grandchild to her blood. But out, affection!
All bond and privilege of nature, break! ³
Let it be virtuous to be obstinate.—
What is that curt'sy worth? or those doves' eyes,
Which can make gods forsworn?—I melt, and am not
Of stronger earth than others.—My mother bows;
As if Olympus to a molehill should
In supplication nod: and my young boy
Hath an aspect of intercession,⁴ which
Great nature cries 'Deny not.'—Let the Volsces
Plough Rome, and harrow Italy: I'll never
Be such a gosling⁵ to obey instinct; but stand,
As if a man were author of himself,⁶
And knew no other kin.

VIRGILIA.

My lord and husband!

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

These eyes are not the same I wore in Rome.

VIRGILIA.

The sorrow that delivers us thus changed ⁷
Makes you think so.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

Like a dull actor now,
I have forgot my part, and I am out,⁸
Even to a full disgrace.—Best of my flesh,

¹ this trunk was framed: this body of mine was formed. ² in her hand: led by her hand. ³ All . . . break: break all ties of kinship. ⁴ an aspect of intercession: a pleading look. ⁵ gosling: young goose. ⁶ author of himself: his own maker. ⁷ thus changed: the women are wearing mourning. ⁸ out: at a loss for words.

Forgive my tyranny; but do not say,
 For that, 'Forgive our Romans.' O, a kiss
 Long as my exile, sweet as my revenge!
 Now, by the jealous queen of heaven,¹ that kiss
 I carried from thee, dear; and my true lip
 Hath virgin'd it² e'er since.—You gods! I prate,
 And the most noble mother of the world
 Leave unsaluted: sink, my knee, i'th' earth;
 Of thy deep duty more impression show
 Than that of common sons.

[Kneels.]

VOLUMNIA.

O, stand up blest!
 Whilst, with no softer cushion than the flint,
 I kneel before thee; and improperly
 Show duty, as mistaken all this while
 Between the child and parent.

[Kneels.]

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

What is this?

Your knees to me? to your corrected³ son?
 Then let the pebbles on the hungry beach
 Fillip⁴ the stars; then let the mutinous winds
 Strike the proud cedars 'gainst the fiery sun;
 Murd'ring impossibility, to make
 What cannot be, slight work.⁵

VOLUMNIA.

Thou art my warrior,
 I holp⁶ to frame thee.—Do you know this lady?

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

The noble sister of Publicola,
 The moon of Rome;⁷ chaste as the icicle,
 That's curdied⁸ by the frost from purest snow,
 And hangs on Dian's temple:—dear Valerial

¹ the jealous queen of heaven: Juno, Jupiter's jealous wife.
² virgin'd it: kept it chaste. ³ corrected: punishable. ⁴ Fillip: strike. ⁵ slight work: a simple task. ⁶ holp: helped. ⁷ The moon of Rome: the Diana (the chaste moon goddess) of Rome.
⁸ curdied: curdled; congealed.

VOLUMNIA.

This is a poor epitome of yours,¹
Which by the interpretation of full time²
May show like all yourself.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

The god of soldiers,
With the consent of supreme Jove, inform³
Thy thoughts with nobleness; that thou mayst prove
To shame invulnerable, and stick i'the wars
Like a great sea-mark,⁴ standing every flaw,⁵
And saving those that eye thee!

VOLUMNIA.

Your knee,⁶ sirrah.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

That's my brave boy!

VOLUMNIA.

Even he, your wife, this lady, and myself,
Are suitors to you.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

I beseech you, peace:
Or, if you'd ask, remember this before,—
The things I have forsworn to grant⁷ may never
Be held by you denials. Do not bid me
Dismiss my soldiers, or capitulate⁸
Again with Rome's mechanics:—tell me not
Wherein I seem unnatural: desire not
T'allay my rages and revenges with
Your colder reasons.

VOLUMNIA.

O, no more, no more!
You have said you will not grant us any thing;
For we have nothing else to ask, but that

¹ a poor epitome of yours: a miniature version of you (Coriolanus' son). ² by the interpretation of full time: when manhood has shown what he is. ³ inform: form. ⁴ sea-mark: beacon; lighthouse. ⁵ standing every flaw: withstanding every squall (tempest). ⁶ Your knee: make a curtesy to your father. ⁷ forsworn to grant: vowed not to do. ⁸ capitulate: agree to terms.

Which you deny already: yet we will ask;
That, if you fail in¹ our request, the blame
May hang upon your hardness;² therefore hear us.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

Aufidius, and you Volsces, mark; for we'll
Hear naught from Rome in private.—Your request?

VOLUMNIA.

Should we be silent and not speak, our raiment
And state of bodies³ would bewray⁴ what life
We have led since thy exile. Think with thyself
How more unfortunate than all living women
Are we come hither: since that thy sight, which should
Make our eyes flow with joy, hearts dance with comforts,
Constrains them weep, and shake with fear and sorrow;
Making the mother, wife, and child, to see
The son, the husband, and the father, tearing
His country's bowels out. And to poor we⁵
Thine enmity's most capital:⁶ thou barr'st us
Our prayers to the gods, which is a comfort
That all but we enjoy; for how can we,
Alas, how can we for our country pray,
Whereto we are bound,—together with thy victory,
Whereto we are bound? alack, or⁷ we must lose
The country, our dear nurse, or else thy person,
Our comfort in the country. We must find
An evident⁸ calamity, though we had
Our wish, which side should win; for either thou
Must, as a foreign recreant,⁹ be led
With manacles through our streets, or else

¹ fail in: deny. ² hardness: obstinacy. ³ state of bodies: physical health. ⁴ bewray: betray; expose. ⁵ we: us. ⁶ capital: deadly. ⁷ or: either. ⁸ evident: obvious. ⁹ recreant: traitor.

Triumphantly tread on thy country's ruin,
And bear the palm¹ for having bravely shed
Thy wife and children's blood. For myself, son,
I purpose not to wait on fortune till
These wars determine:² if I cannot persuade thee
Rather to show a noble grace to both parts³
Than seek the end of one, thou shalt no sooner
March to assault thy country than to tread—
Trust to't, thou shalt not—on thy mother's womb
That brought thee to this world.

VIRGILIA.

Ay, and mine,
That brought you forth this boy, to keep your name
Living to time.

YOUNG MARCIUS.

A'⁴ shall not tread on me;
I'll run away till I am bigger, but then I'll fight.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

Not of a woman's tenderness to be,
Requires nor child nor woman's face to see.⁵
I have sat too long.

[Rising.]

VOLUMNIA.

Nay, go not from us thus.
If it were so that our request did tend
To save the Romans, thereby to destroy
The Volscies whom you serve, you might condemn us,
As poisonous of your honour: no; our suit⁶
Is, that you reconcile them: while the Volscies
May say, 'This mercy we have show'd;' the Romans,
'This we received;' and each in⁷ either side

¹ the palm: a sign of victory. ² determine: end. ³ parts: sides.
⁴ A': he. ⁵ Not . . . see: if a man is not to yield to womanly
weakness, he must avoid looking upon the faces of his child or his
wife. ⁶ suit: petition. ⁷ in: on.

Give the all-hail ¹ to thee, and cry, 'Be blest
 For making up this peace!' Thou know'st, great son,
 The end of war's uncertain; but this certain,
 That, if thou conquer Rome, the benefit
 Which thou shalt thereby reap is such a name,
 Whose repetition will be dogg'd with curses;
 Whose chronicle thus writ,—'The man was noble,
 But with his last attempt he wiped it out;
 Destroy'd his country; and his name remains
 To the ensuing age² abhorr'd.' Speak to me, son:
 Thou hast affected ³ the fine strains of honour,
 To imitate the graces of the gods;
 To tear with thunder the wide cheeks o'the air,⁴
 And yet to charge thy sulphur with a bolt⁵
 That should but rive⁶ an oak. Why dost not speak?
 Think'st thou it honourable for a noble man
 Still to remember wrongs?—Daughter, speak you:
 He cares not for your weeping.—Speak thou, boy:
 Perhaps thy childishness will move him more
 Than can our reasons.—There's no man in the world
 More bound to's mother; yet here he lets me prate
 Like one i'the stocks.⁷—Thou hast never in thy life
 Show'd thy dear mother any courtesy;⁸
 When she, poor hen, fond of no second brood,
 Has cluckt thee to the wars, and safely home,
 Loaden⁹ with honour. Say my request's unjust,
 And spurn me back: but if it be not so,
 Thou art not honest;¹⁰ and the gods will plague thee,
 That thou restrain'st from me the duty which
 To a mother's part belongs.—He turns away:
 Down, ladies; let us shame him with our knees.

¹ all-hail: a salutation usually reserved for kings. ² To the ensuing age: for all time to come. ³ affected: wished for. ⁴ wide cheeks . . . air: an allusion to the swollen cheeks of cherubs as depicted on ancient maps. ⁵ bolt: lightning bolt (cannon ball). ⁶ rive: split. ⁷ Like . . . stocks: like a man in the stocks, who is not free to do anything but talk. ⁸ courtesy: special favor. ⁹ Loaden: loaded down; laden. ¹⁰ honest: honorable.

To his surname Coriolanus 'longs¹ more pride
Than pity to our prayers. Down: an end;
This is the last:—so we will home to Rome,
And die among our neighbours.—Nay, behold's:
This boy, that cannot tell what he would have,
But kneels and holds up hands for fellowship,²
Does reason³ our petition with more strength
Than thou has to deny't.—Come, let us go:
This fellow had a Volscian to his mother;
His wife is in Corioli, and this child
Like him by chance.—Yet give us our dispatch:
I am husht⁴ until our city be a-fire,
And then I'll speak a little.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS [*holding her by the hand,
silent*].

O mother, mother!
What have you done? Behold, the heavens do ope,
The gods look down, and this unnatural scene
They laugh at. O my mother, mother! O!
You have won a happy victory to Rome;
But, for your son, believe it, O, believe it,
Most dangerously you have with him prevail'd,
If not most mortal⁵ to him. But, let it come.—
Aufidius, though I cannot make true wars,
I'll frame convenient⁶ peace.—Now, good Aufidius,
Were you in my stead,⁷ would you have heard
A mother less? or granted less, Aufidius?

TULLUS AUFIDIUS.

I was moved withal.⁸

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

I dare be sworn you were:
And, sir, it is no little thing to make

¹ 'longs: belongs. ² for fellowship: to keep us company. ³ reason: argue. ⁴ husht: silent. ⁵ mortal: fatal. ⁶ convenient: a fitting. ⁷ in my stead: in my place. ⁸ withal: for all that.

Mine eyes to sweat compassion. But, good sir,
 What peace you'll make, advise me: for my part
 I'll not to Rome, I'll back with you; and pray you,
 Stand to me¹ in this cause.—O mother! wife!

TULLUS AUFIDIUS [*aside*].

I am glad thou hast set thy mercy and thy honour
 At difference in thee: out of that I'll work
 Myself a former fortune.²

[*The LADIES make signs to CORIOLANUS.*]

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS

[*to VOLUMNIA, VIRGILIA, &c.*].

Ay, by and by;

But we will drink together; and you shall bear
 A better witness back than words, which we,
 On like conditions, will have counter-seal'd.³
 Come, enter with us. Ladies, you deserve
 To have a temple built you: all the swords
 In Italy, and her confederate arms,⁴
 Could not have made this peace.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE IV.

Rome. A public place.

Enter MENENIUS with SICINIUS.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

See you yond coign o'the Capitol,—yond corner-stone?

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

Why, what of that?

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

If it be possible for you to displace it with your little finger,
 there is some hope the ladies of Rome, especially his mother,

¹ Stand to me: support me.

² a former fortune: back to my former good fortune.

³ you . . . counter-seal'd: you shall take back something better than an oral promise—a written and signed agreement.

⁴ her confederate arms: the weapons of her (Italy's) allies.

may prevail with him. But I say there is no hope in't: our throats are sentenced, and stay upon¹ execution.

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

Is't possible that so short a time can alter the condition² of a man?

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

There is differency³ between a grub and a butterfly; yet your butterfly was a grub. This Marcius is grown from man to dragon: he has wings; he's more than a creeping thing.

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

He loved his mother dearly.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

So did he me: and he no more remembers his mother now than an eight-year-old horse. The tartness of his face sours ripe grapes: when he walks, he moves like an engine,⁴ and the ground shrinks before his treading: he is able to pierce a corslet⁵ with his eye; talks like a knell,⁶ and his hum is a battery.⁷ He sits in his state,⁸ as a thing made for Alexander.⁹ What he bids be done, is finisht with his bidding.¹⁰ He wants nothing of a god but eternity, and a heaven to throne in.

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

Yes, mercy, if you report him truly.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

I paint him in the character.¹¹ Mark what mercy his mother shall bring from him: there is no more mercy in him than there is milk in a male tiger; that shall our poor city find: and all this is 'long of you.¹²

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

The gods be good unto us!

¹ stay upon: await. ² condition: character. ³ differency: difference. ⁴ engine: battering ram. ⁵ corslet: breastplate. ⁶ knell: death knell. ⁷ battery: cannon. ⁸ in his state: in his chair of state. ⁹ as . . . Alexander: like a statue of Alexander the Great. ¹⁰ is finisht . . . bidding: is as good as done the minute he stops speaking. ¹¹ in the character: as he really is. ¹² 'long of you: because of you.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

No, in such a case the gods will not be good unto us. When we banisht him, we respected not them; and, he returning to break our necks, they respect not us.

Enter a MESSENGER.

MESSENGER.

Sir, if you'd save your life, fly to your house:
The plebeians have got your fellow-tribune,
And hale¹ him up and down; all swearing, if
The Roman ladies bring not comfort home,
They'll give him death by inches.²

Enter another MESSENGER.

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

What's the news?

SECOND MESSENGER.

Good news, good news;—the ladies have prevail'd,
The Volscians are dislodged,³ and Marcius gone:
A merrier day did never yet greet Rome,
No, not⁴ the expulsion of the Tarquins.

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

Friend,

Art thou certain this is true? is it most certain?

SECOND MESSENGER.

As certain as I know the sun is fire:
Where have you lurkt,⁵ that you make doubt of it?
Ne'er through an arch so hurried the blown tide⁶
As the recomforted through the gates. Why, hark you!
[*Trumpets hautboys,⁷ drums beat, all together.*
The trumpets, sackbuts,⁸ psalteries,⁹ and fifes,

¹ hale: haul; drag. ² death by inches: a lingering death. ³ are dislodged: have abandoned the siege. ⁴ not: not even. ⁵ lurkt: been hiding. ⁶ blown tide: swollen tide. ⁷ hautboys: oboes. ⁸ sackbuts: early instruments resembling the trombone. ⁹ psalteries: stringed instruments somewhat like the zither.

Tabors,¹ and cymbals, and the shouting Romans,
Make the sun dance. Hark you! [A shout within.]

MENENIUS AGRIPPA.

This is good news.

I will go meet the ladies. This Volumnia
Is worth of consuls, senators, patricians,
A city full; of tribunes, such as you,
A sea and land full. You have pray'd well to-day:
This morning for ten thousand of your throats
I'd not have given a doit.²—Hark, how they joy!
[Sound still with the shouts.]

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

First, the gods bless you for your tidings; next,
Accept my thankfulness.

SECOND MESSENGER.

Sir, we have all
Great cause to give great thanks.

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

They are near the city?

SECOND MESSENGER.

Almost at point to enter.

SICINIUS VELUTUS.

We will meet them,
And help the joy.

[Exeunt.]

SCENE V.

The same. A street near the gate.

Enter two SENATORS, with LADIES, passing over the stage; with other LORDS.

FIRST SENATOR.

Behold our patroness, the life of Rome!
Call all your tribes together, praise the gods,

¹ Tabors: drums.

² doit: a small Dutch coin, equal to about one-half farthing.

SECOND CONSPIRATOR.

Most noble sir,
If you do hold the same intent wherein
You wisht us parties,¹ we'll deliver you
Of your great danger.

TULLUS AUFIDIUS.

Sir, I cannot tell:
We must proceed as we do find the people.

THIRD CONSPIRATOR.

The people will remain uncertain whilst
'Twixt you there's difference;² but the fall of either
Makes the survivor heir of all.

TULLUS AUFIDIUS.

I know it;
And my pretext³ to strike at him admits
A good construction.⁴ I raised him, and I pawn'd
Mine honour for his truth: who being so heighten'd,
He water'd his new plants with dews of flattery,
Seducing so my friends; and, to this end,
He bow'd⁵ his nature, never known before
But to be rough, unswayable, and free.⁶

THIRD CONSPIRATOR.

Sir, his stoutness
When he did stand for consul, which he lost
By lack of stooping,—

TULLUS AUFIDIUS.

That I would have spoke of:
Being banisht for't, he came unto my hearth;
Presented to my knife his throat: I took him;
Made him joint-servant with me; gave him way
In all his own desires; nay, let him choose
Out of my files,⁷ his projects to accomplish,

¹ parties: to take part. ² difference: dissension. ³ pretext: excuse.
⁴ good construction: favorable interpretation. ⁵ bow'd: forced.
⁶ free: independent. ⁷ files: ranks of troops.

My best and freshest men; served his designments¹
 In mine own person; help to reap the fame
 Which he did end all his;² and took some pride
 To do myself this wrong: till, at the last,
 I seem'd his follower, not partner; and
 He waged me with his countenance, as if
 I had been mercenary.³

FIRST CONSPIRATOR.

So he did, my lord,—
 The army marvell'd at it; and, in the last,
 When he had carried Rome, and that we lookt
 For no less spoil than glory,—

TULLUS AUFIDIUS.

There was it;—
 For which my sinews⁴ shall be stretcht upon him.
 At a few drops of women's rheum,⁵ which are
 As cheap as lies, he sold the blood and labour
 Of our great action: therefore shall he die,
 And I'll renew me in his fall.—But, hark!
[Drums and trumpets sound, with great shouts of the PEOPLE.]

FIRST CONSPIRATOR.

Your native town you enter'd like a post,⁶
 And had no welcomes home; but he returns,
 Splitting the air with noise.

SECOND CONSPIRATOR.

And patient fools,
 Whose children he hath slain, their base throats tear
 With giving him glory.

THIRD CONSPIRATOR.

Therefore, at your vantage,⁷
 Ere he express himself, or move the people

¹ designments: designs. ² help . . . his: helped him to reap the fame which he did garner as his own. ³ waged . . . mercenary: rewarded me with patronizing looks, as if I were a hired soldier. ⁴ sinews: strength. ⁵ rheum: tears. ⁶ post: postboy; common messenger. ⁷ at your vantage: take your advantage (opportunity).

With what he would say, let him feel your sword,
Which we will second. When he lies along,¹
After your way his tale pronounced shall bury
His reasons with his body.²

TULLUS AUFIDIUS.

Say no more:

Here come the lords.

Enter the LORDS of the city.

LORDS.

You are most welcome home.

TULLUS AUFIDIUS.

I have not deserved it.

But, worthy lords, have you with heed perused³
What I have written to you?

LORDS.

We have.

FIRST LORD.

And grieve to hear't.

What faults he made before the last, I think
Might have found easy fines:⁴ but there to end
Where he was to begin, and give away
The benefit of our levies, answering us
With our own charge,⁵ making a treaty where
There was a yielding,—this admits no excuse.

TULLUS AUFIDIUS.

He approaches: you shall hear him.

Enter CORIOLANUS, marching with drum and colours; the COMMONERS being with him.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

Hail, lords! I am return'd your soldier;
No more infected⁶ with my country's love
Than when I parted hence, but still subsisting⁷

¹ along: prostrate; stretched out. ² After your way . . . body: after you have told your side of the story, any justification on his part will be buried with him. ³ with heed perused: carefully read.
⁴ easy fines: light penalties. ⁵ give away . . . charge: give away the spoils of war due a conqueror and leave us to pay the cost of the wars ourselves. ⁶ infected: contaminated. ⁷ subsisting: continuing.

Under your great command. You are to know,
That prosperously I have attempted, and,
With bloody passage, led your wars even to
The gates of Rome. Our spoils we have brought home
Doth more than counterpoise¹ a full third part
The charges² of the action. We have made peace,
With no less honour to the Antiates
Than shame to the Romans: and we here deliver,
Subscribed³ by the consuls and patricians,
Together with the seal o'the senate, what
We have compounded⁴ on.

TULLUS AUFIDIUS.

Read it not, noble lords;
But tell the traitor, in the highest degree
He hath abused your powers.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

Traitor!—how now!

TULLUS AUFIDIUS.

Ay, traitor, Marcius!

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

Marcius!

TULLUS AUFIDIUS.

Ay, Marcius, Caius Marcius: dost thou think
I'll grace thee with that robbery, thy stoln name
Coriolanus, in Corioli?—

You lords and heads o'the state, perfidiously
He has betray'd your business, and given up,
For certain drops of salt,⁵ your city Rome—
I say, your city—to his wife and mother;
Breaking his oath and resolution, like
A twist⁶ of rotten silk; never admitting
Counsel o'the war;⁷ but at his nurse's tears

¹ counterpoise: counterbalance. ² charges: costs. ³ Subscribed: signed. ⁴ compounded: agreed. ⁵ drops of salt: tears. ⁶ twist: skein. ⁷ never . . . war: asking no advice from his council of war.

He whined and roar'd away your victory;
That¹ pages² blusht at him, and men of heart³
Lookt wond'ring each at other.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

Hear'st thou, Mars?

TULLUS AUFIDIUS.

Name not the god, thou boy of tears! ⁴

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

Ha!

TULLUS AUFIDIUS.

No more.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

Measureless liar, thou hast made my heart
Too great for what contains it. Boy! O slave!—
Pardon me, lords, 'tis the first time that ever
I was forced to scold. Your judgements, my grave lords,
Must give this cur the lie: and his own notion⁵—
Who wears my stripes imprest upon him; that⁶
Must bear my beating to his grave—shall join
To thrust the lie unto him.

FIRST LORD.

Peace, both, and hear me speak.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

Cut me to pieces, Volscies; men and lads,
Stain all your edges⁷ on me.—Boy! false hound!
If you have writ your annals true, 'tis there,
That, like an eagle in a dove-cote, I
Flutter'd⁸ your Volscians in Corioli:
Alone I did it.—Boy!

TULLUS AUFIDIUS.

Why, noble lords,
Will you be put in mind of his blind fortune,⁹

¹ That: so that. ² pages: young boys. ³ men of heart: courageous men. ⁴ boy of tears: crybaby (to address a man as a *boy* was an insult). ⁵ notion: understanding; intelligence. ⁶ that: who. ⁷ edges: swords. ⁸ Flutter'd: put to flight. ⁹ blind fortune: lucky chance.

Which was your shame, by this unholy braggart,
'Fore your own eyes and ears?

ALL THE CONSPIRATORS.

Let him die for't!

ALL THE PEOPLE.

Tear him to pieces!—Do it presently! ¹—He kill'd
My son!—My daughter!—He kill'd my cousin
Marcus!—He kill'd my father!—

SECOND LORD.

Peace, ho!—no outrage:—peace!
The man is noble, and his fame folds-in
~~This~~ orb o'the earth.² His last offences to us
Shall have judicious³ hearing.—Stand,⁴ Aufidius,
And trouble not the peace.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.

O, that I had him,
With six Aufidiuses, or more, his tribe,
To use my lawful sword!

TULLUS AUFIDIUS.

Insolent villain!

ALL THE CONSPIRATORS.

Kill, kill, kill, kill, kill him!

[AUFIDIUS and the CONSPIRATORS draw, and kill CORIOLANUS,
who falls: AUFIDIUS stands on⁵ him.]

LORDS.

Hold, hold, hold, hold!

TULLUS AUFIDIUS.

My noble masters, hear me speak.

FIRST LORD.

O Tullus,—

SECOND LORD.

Thou hast done a deed whereat valour will weep.

¹ presently: at once.

² folds-in . . . earth: is world-wide.

³ judicious: judicial.

⁴ Stand: stay your hand.

⁵ on: over.

THIRD LORD.

Tread not upon him.—Masters all, be quiet;
Put up your swords.

TULLUS AUFIDIUS.

My lords, when you shall know—as in this rage,
Provoked by him, you cannot—the great danger
Which this man's life did owe you,¹ you'll rejoice
That he is thus cut off. Please it your honours
To call me to your senate, I'll deliver²
Myself your loyal servant, or endure
Your heaviest censure.³

FIRST LORD.

Bear from hence his body,—
And mourn you for him:—let him be regarded
As the most noble corse⁴ that ever herald
Did follow to his urn.

SECOND LORD.

His own impatience
Takes from Aufidius a great part of blame.
Let's make the best of it.

TULLUS AUFIDIUS.

My rage is gone;
And I am struck with sorrow.—Take him up:—
Help, three o'the chiefest soldiers; I'll be one.—
Beat thou the drum, that it speak mournfully:
Trail your steel pikes,⁵—Though in this city he
Hath widow'd and unchilded many a one,
Which to this hour bewail the injury,
Yet he shall have a noble memory.—

Assist.

[*Exeunt, bearing the body of MARCIUS. A dead march sounded.*]

¹ the great danger . . . you: the danger you were in so long as this man lived. ² deliver: prove. ³ censure: condemnation.

⁴ corse: corpse. ⁵ Trail your steel pikes: drag your steel pikes on the ground (as a sign of mourning).

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